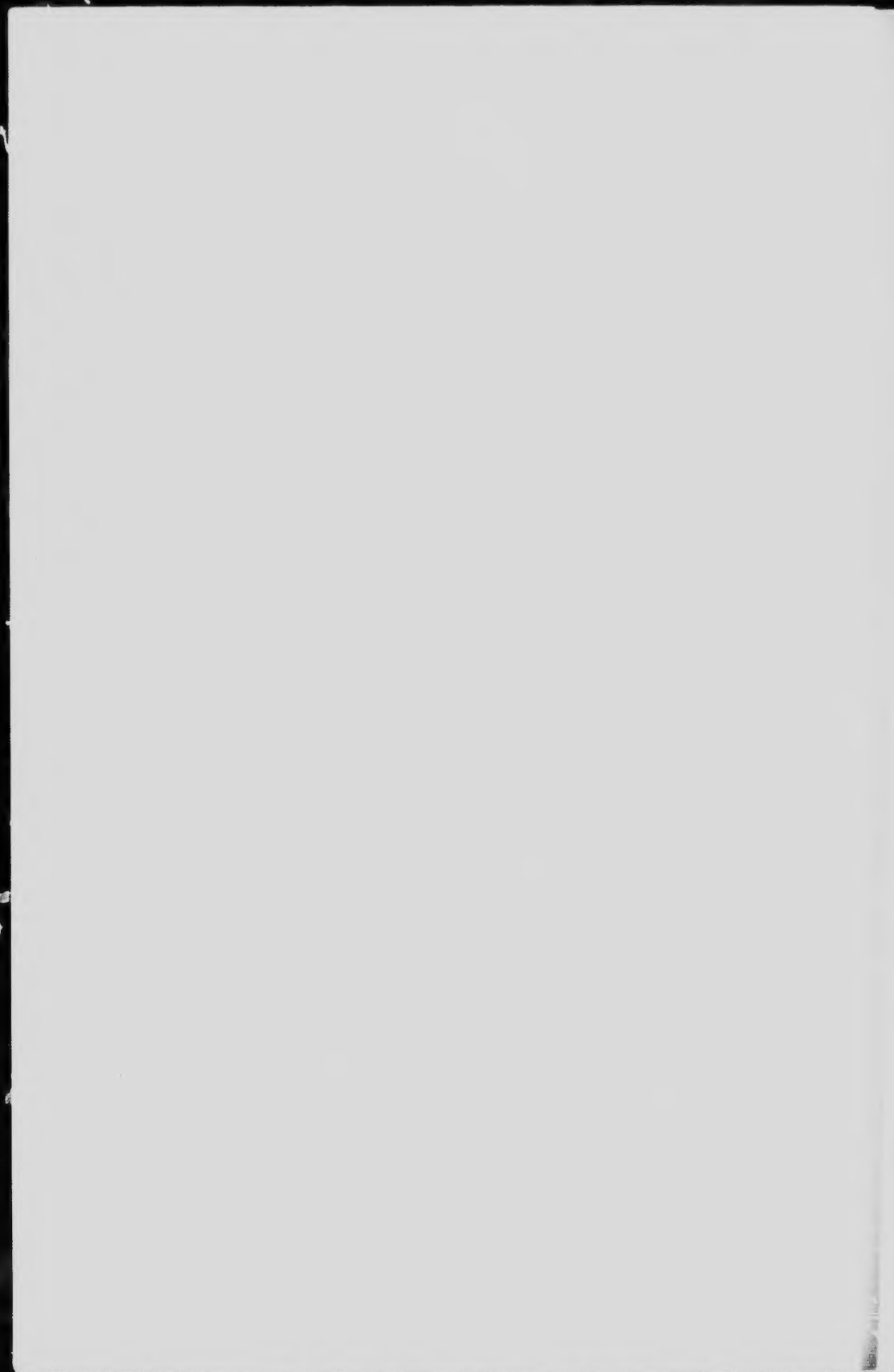


YOZONDÈ OF THE WILDERNESS







"It is not a good spirit that will keep a husband from his wife."

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Y O Z O N D È

OF THE

WILDERNESS

BY

HARRY IRVING GREENE

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YOZONDÈ OF THE WILDERNESS

THIS is a story of the region of Temagami—of Temagami the mystic—as it is still sometimes told when the campfire flickers uncertainly and the darkness comes creeping out from under the trees, and slinks close upon the backs of the fire-watchers; and the forest, stilling itself, seems to crowd in as if to listen to its own history.

And in the story is spread a page from the life of an unnamed white man, who, smarting beneath the lash of his own kind, blindly sought the wilderness in his humiliation; much as an erring child seeks night and solitude as he repents beneath the silently swinging constellations, and listens until through the void he feels, rather than hears, the silent call that reclaims him to his own.

And in it, also, is the story of the love of a woman, a love for a wonderful being, who

came to her from out of the great unknown during the enchanted hours of twilight, and before whom she poured her devotion as unstintedly as ever woman has done since she first threw herself upon the breast of man, and whispered, "My lord, my master, my husband!"

Temagami—deep, crystal waters. Its shining forests and purring rapids are still as fresh and sweet as when this nameless white wanderer, dreaming upon their shores, saw, as in a vision, the mystic, star-distant face in the unutterable beyond, and felt his soul vibrate to the soundless call. Its woodlands are still unbitten by the ax, and its trails, though beaten harder and broader now, still wind their ways through shaded wonderlands and sun-mottled glades where the wood grouse drums without ever a thought of man. Its mystery and silence still hover over it; its wild life still remains; its enchantment still haunts it.

In the bright, cool days of summer, the canoes of the Algonquins and the Ojibways

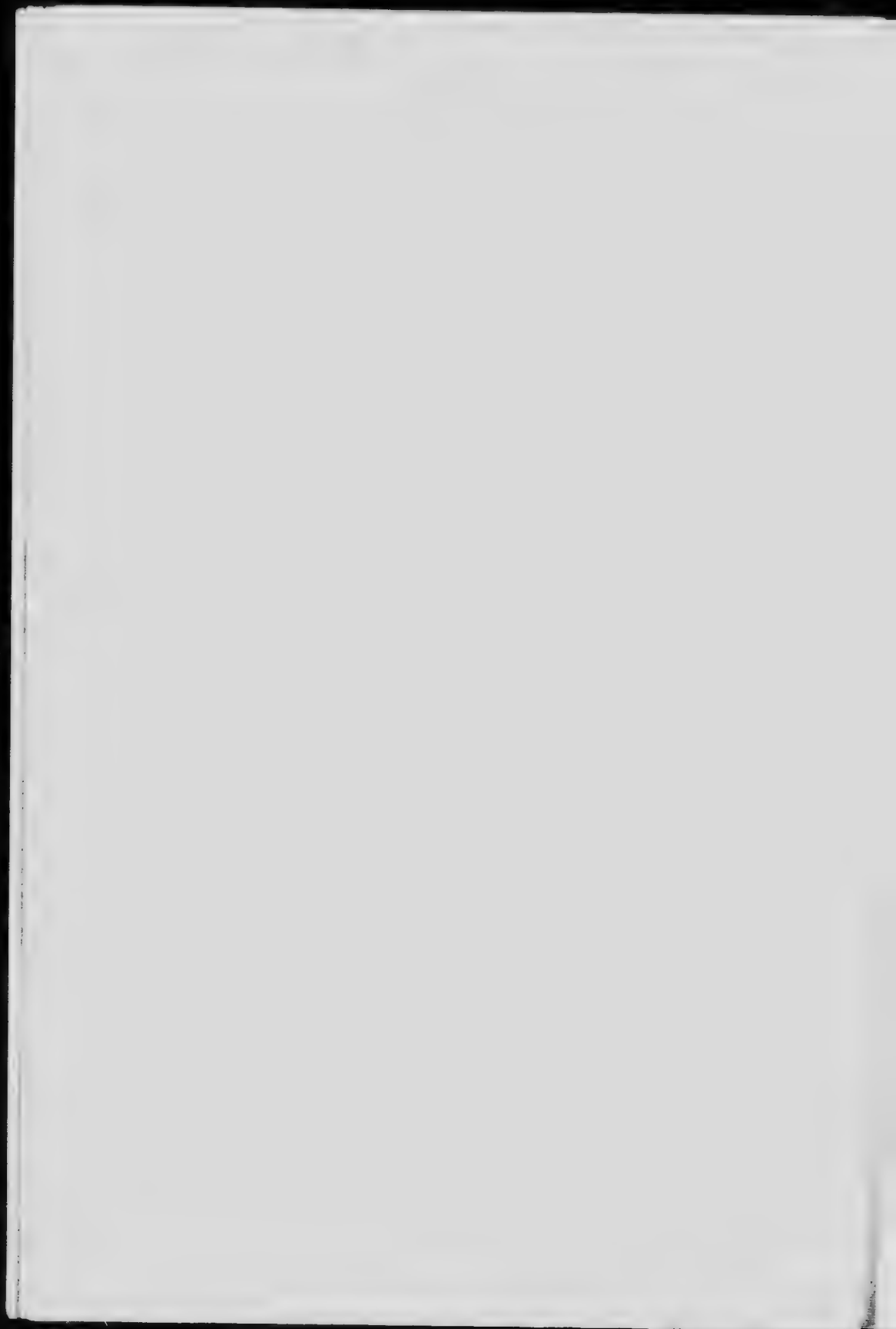
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still thread its narrow thoroughfares, and float across its transparent lakes. And when the snows have fallen to the height of a tall man's thigh, the blurred signature of the snowshoe of the hunter is still written close upon the track of the moose as the great beast wanders amongst the somber spruce, or pauses to feed under birch that shimmer in the moonlight like spectral trees. Its blazed trails still lead far into the breathless hush of the Great Unroofed—leading from mystic, island-dotted lake to other lakes still more mystic and thicker island-dotted; Wasacsinagama, Jumping Caribou, Hanging Stone--their name is legion, their charms as indescribable as the tints of an opal.

Upon their shores may now be found the ashes of many a campfire, for the white man of the cities, in his restlessness, has found them out, and in the sun-filled days of summer he may sometimes be found dozing upon the wave-lapped shores as he smokes the pipe of peace, and dreams over the campfire stories of the night before.

For Temagami is still unspoiled—yes, even unsullied. The last and most beautiful of Nature's recesses, where forests, waters, and skies commingle to make a perfect whole, it still lures its own as bewitchingly as in the dim days when the Saviour walked upon the waters of Galilee. But two of its former characteristics have disappeared, and happily those two were its vices. Its dangers and hardships have gone, but its witchery is still potent.

YOZONDÈ OF THE WILDERNESS



CHAPTER I

FROM the wet sand that buried the feet of the rushes, the Cree arose. Straight and tall he stood, rifle in hand, his eyes flicking the landscape, and his blurred features made doubly sullen by a scowl that darkened them as a black squall darkens the face of waters. To his left lay the forest, silent, brooding, beast-haunted; to his right, the lone lake, with the wind ruffling it, as it does the breast of a grouse.

A mile across the water lay the forest again, stretching itself, almost unbroken, away and away until it grew shriveled and thin and at last starved and died upon the barrens of the Arctic Circle. Keenly his search swept the shore-line, where hanging cedars arched over deep waters, and sand beaches ran down the rocky shoals; then with swift steps he passed into the forest by way of the game trail that lay before him.

A dozen yards within the trees, he stopped and seated himself upon a moss-cushioned log. Upon the ground before him were three other Crees and a white man. The paraphernalia of wilderness voyageurs was scattered about them. Two birch-bark canoes lay bottoms upward among the ferns, and three great packs rested where they had been heaved from the shoulders of their carriers. For some moments the four eyed the newcomer in silence, the white man smoking with quick, explosive puffs, the Indians doing nothing at all. Then from between his teeth, his pipestem still unremoved, the white man spoke in the gutturals of the Cree tongue:

“You wert and looked. What did you find?”

The gaze of the one addressed remained riveted upon the distance, and he allowed a dozen more seconds to pass in silence. Then he answered in a series of clucking sounds which were coupled together in twos and threes, and which had accenting pauses between them like the sounds and pauses of the

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telegraphic code. Solemnly he spoke of the tracks of the unfriendly Ojibways which he had counted in the sand, of the danger of going head, and of his determination to return. Then, pausing, he looked doggedly upon the ground.

The eyes of the white man narrowed a bit, and his gaze bore heavily upon the speaker. For two days he had noted in the sullen demeanor of his companions the hourly growing mutiny, and now that it had suddenly asserted itself, it aroused no surprise within him. In its stead came a flush of hot anger that was quickly tempered by cold determination, and framing his answer, he drove it into them hard as steel:

"Now you shall listen to me. Two weeks ago, when I told you that I wished you to guide me to the post, you shook your heads, and said 'No,' for the way was far. I told you that your words were true, but that I would pay you your price for every step you took. Then again you shook your heads, complaining that the work was hard, and I

answered you that I would buy your sweat drop by drop. Once more you turned away, muttering that the Ojibways might kill us all, and to that I replied that I would pay you for the risk, but, once we were started, 'here must be no turning back unless I ordered it. Then you held a council, and said that you would go with me, and we agreed upon the sum which I was to pay you. Half of this amount I gave you in your hands; and the rest, as you well know, is in the strong-box of the agent, awaiting your return. Now, midway in our journey, you smell an Ojibway, and your blood turns to ice, and you would run away like squaws should I let you. But I will not let you. It is not the white man's way to turn back because the trail is hard or dangerous. If we can avoid the Ojibways, we will do so. If we must fight them, we will do that. Anyway, we will go on."

The four listeners stirred uneasily, as leaves stir before a breath from the north; then, as the speaker's voice died, they became motion-

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less again. Knocking the ashes from his pipe, and arising, the white man stood before them, rugged and uncompromising. With the muzzle of his rifle he nudged their leader on the shoulder.

"Come," he said grimly.

Under the touch, the Indian drew back a trifle, as a half-tamed beast shrinks beneath the prod of its keeper, both fear and menace lurking in the cringe. Sullenly the other Crees bent their glance upon the one against whom the muzzle of the rifle had pressed. For two weeks they had traveled with this strange white man, and day by day their perplexity had grown.

His disregard of roaring rapids and gale-swept lakes seemed the rashness of a fool; yet ever his tongue had lashed them on, and no accidents had come to them, even in places where destruction seemed inevitable. Day after day his tirelessness had been the tirelessness of a machine, and never before had they been driven so hard or so fast; yet their sleeps had been regular, and their mus-

cles were as pliant as when they had started. Upon the portages his strength was that of two men, yet so easy were his movements that he seemed not to work at all.

And back of it all was the thing which they could not comprehend; the mysterious, intangible force that drove them on like a great silent gale, elastic yet resistless, indefinable, insistent, and baffling as gravity itself. Half admiring him, half hating him, understanding him not at all, they had hitherto obeyed him in silence; and now, at a covert glance from their leader, quick as a flash of lightning, but pregnant with meaning, they obeyed once more.

They arose and turned upon the scattered articles of transport. Two of them, slipping paddles lengthwise between the split cross pieces of the canoes, bent their strong backs, and with swinging upheaves brought the crafts bottom upward over their heads, and, balancing them there, went shuffling along the trail, like grotesque, armor-shelled monsters of some prehistoric age. The three

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who remained gathered up their packs. In these bundles were the camp outfit for the long trip; the tent, the grubstake, the cooking utensils, the blankets, the axes, the ammunition, the change of clothing, the tobacco, and the minor things; bulky and heavy burdens for a man's back on the best of roads; heartbreaking in the tangle of the brush. The heaviest of these the white man swung upward as another man might have shouldered a bag of meal, and, adjusting the strap over his forehead, bent forward in the manner of one who climbs a steep hill. Followed by the similarly laden two, he vanished down the forest aisle, close in the wake of the receding canoes.

They turned from the lake, and zigzagged up the spine of a half-mountainous ridge, rugged, steep as the roof of a cathedral. Stones rolled from beneath their feet, and they slipped backward and lurched as they regained their balance. Snaring roots caught their feet, and threw them forward to hands and knees. Rotted logs, smothered with

moss, crushed egg-like under their weight, and their stout ankles bent like reeds beneath the shock. Fallen trunks, waist high, opposed them, and over these they crawled, tortoise-like, in grunting effort. A tree-top in an impenetrable abattis barred their way, and they turned aside to flounder around it to a virgin chaparral. In the humid closeness of the forest, their breathing grew quick and sharp, like the pantings of hoist γ engines. But up, and still up, without pause, they followed the trail until the backbone of the ridge lay beneath their feet, and there, with the ground lying fairly level before them, they broke into a shuffling trot.

From either side the forest sought to grapple them. Like some monster inconceivably vast, its myriad fingers clutched at them as they passed. They rasped harshly along the sides of the canoes as they sought for a hold; they ripped at the canvas packs; they grasped at the ankles; but, by sheer momentum, the voyageurs broke all holds, each keeping two yards behind his predeces-

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sor, to avoid the wicked back-lashes of bent boughs suddenly released. They reached a shoulder of the ridge, where the trail dropped almost as a plummet to the bottom of a gulch, and down this treacherous incline they slid until they reached the level of the lake once more.

And here at the lowest point they met a sluggish creek that crawled through a bed of muskeg that quivered like a jelly-fish, and plotted death against all things, and into this vegetable crust they plunged fatalistically. Here their efforts became herculean, for the bog closed about them like quicksands, and as they tore their feet from its suction the muscles of their legs knotted and cramped the pull. Then out they floundered, and went staggering upward once more, until the ridge-crest was reached, and where the gloom of the forest was that of a darkened room. A strong man of the cities, carrying the burden of one of them, would have fallen exhausted within the first five minutes; but for a full hour these giants of the portage did

not pause. Then the trail dropped beneath their feet once more, and the tin-like sheen of broad waters far below came to their eyes through the interstices of the trees, and five minutes later they burst through the brush, and stood upon the bank of an island-dotted lake. With quick bends and swings, the two who bore the canoes unshouldered their burdens, and lowered them gently to the ground, while the following pack-bearers bucked themselves free from their burdens.

Side by side they stood, bareheaded in the cool air, their deep chests heaving heavily, and their foreheads glistening. A dozen times they drank their lungs full to the uttermost, and then, such was the magnificence of their endurance, their chests heaved no more. One by one they threw themselves flat upon their stomachs, and, plunging their faces in the cold waters, drank with huge draughts.

Stomach-full they arose, and threw themselves at length on the moss, or reclined with their backs against trees, as their eyes

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swept the arm of the lake; the rugged shoreline, the distant islands and skies. Not a word was spoken; not a movement made to indicate that they were conscious of just having performed a feat that would have killed the strongest athlete untrained to it. Already they were thinking only of the work to come. The portage of the last hour had been no worse than many other portages—not nearly as bad as some—and already it was forgotten, probably never to be thought of again. The lives of the Crees had been spent in this way. Ten thousand muscle-racking journeys lay in the past, and they hoped for nothing better than ten thousand more to come. And the rougher and the longer the portage, the faster they always went, for a reason which to their minds was rudimentary. For if one must crack his back so many times a day, the sooner it is broken, the sooner it begins to mend.

By destiny they were the burros of the great North woods, the predestined bearers of great weights, and as they traveled con-

solation came to them in the thought that each day their burdens would become lighter as the grubstake vanished down their ever ravening throats. And now, had it not been for the Ojibways, they would have been fairly content. But, toiling as they did by day, they must sleep at night like the bear in his winter trance; and the dread of waking in the darkness to find a hunting-knife at their throats was heavy upon them. Such were the thoughts of the Crees as they flattened themselves upon the mold, but what the white man thought no one could have guessed. Without even looking at his companions, he sat listlessly with half-closed eyes, the smoke of his pipe curling idly upward.

Ten minutes passed like this, and then they arose as if by a signal. Upon the water they slid the canoes, and, slinging the packs into them, crept to their places, paddle in hand. Here, on the narrow arm of the lake, with its sheltering walls, the water lay smooth as a pond, and across it they slipped swiftly to the low swish of their paddles. In the clear

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liquid beneath they saw the gnarled roots of great sunken trees that stretched their tentacles up toward them like the arms of grasping devilfish. Pike and bass hung like shadows beneath them, and far ahead a white-throated loon sped with head turned warily backward, as he repeatedly sounded his weird call. From the dead branches that overhung the lagoon, sentinel ravens arose, with harsh cries of warning, as they went flapping into the distance. On the shore, a fawn, still in the spots, watched them wonderingly.

They reached the windswept edge of the great lake, and its first long swell bearing them upward with insidious gentleness, dropped them deep in the trough of the following billow. Ahead of them was a racing riot of white-capped waves, and the first solid rush of the wind around the point swayed them with its bulk. Out from the rock-bordered shore they passed into the tumbling waters, the roar of the surf drumming in their ears, and the forest humming behind them like a great æolian. Their deeply-

laden crafts lunged heavily through the crests, and the spray from the bows swept them in pelting gusts; but they lowered their heads, and with paddles biting deep drove their way onward. Much danger lay before them in the long gale-ridden expanse that stretched between them and the shelter of the distant islands, and the slip of a paddle might now easily result in a tragedy wherein drowned men would lie upon the bottom with unseeing eyes staring upward. But in half an hour the peril was passed, and they rode smoothly once more in the lea of islets with narrow waterways between them where the paddling was good, and the gale, blocked by the forest, swept harmlessly overhead. As dusk fell, they stepped from the canoes upon a trail which burrowed through the solid forest as a tunnel bores through a hill, and here they paused for the night, with the lake labyrinth behind them. From now on, they would go by land, avoiding the scattered waters that lay ahead, and bearing their burdens upon their shoulders.

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The so't chug of their hatchets fell rapidly as they cut saplings for the erection of a tent. Then they felled a small cedar, and stripping it of its smaller branches, spread them in a thick mattress, points upward, to render their bed soft, and keep the chill of the earth from their bodies. In front of the tent they built a fire, and the venison of the fawn in the pots together with the bacon and tea of the post were soon filling the air with their smell. These they swallowed greedily as they sat upon the ground with their tin plates in their laps, and when all was finished, drew their pipes for the hour of indolence which lay before them—the hour of semi-torpor that man, civilized or wild, demands after his work and fast of the day.

In the first ten days of the journey the party had not been an unsociable one. The Crees had grunted a little English, the white man had clucked a little Cree, and in their nightly hours of rest they had often spoken to each other across the fire. True, their conversation had been in disjointed sentences,

with many pauses for meditation between, when no sounds fell upon their ears but the hoot of an owl, the yelp of a wolf, or the splash of an otter; but such has always been the manner of conversation between those who live in the hush of the wilderness, where the tongue lies subservient to the ear, the eye, and the nose. Still, as they sat together, they had nightly spoken of the lakes and trails to come, of the moose tracks seen in the mud, of the portents of the sky, of the many small things that engross the mind in the loneliness of vast forests and lakes that are scattered thick as drops of dew. Sometimes, too, they had even shuddered a bit over an uncanny illusion to the loup-garou, or chuckled over a remembered mishap of the trail that had sent some blunderer into a headlong fall.

But now, with eyes upon the fire, the Indians sat in the sullenness of half wild sledge dogs that crouch about with averted eyes and expressionless faces, to all appearances listless of all things, yet missing no movement, sound, or smell. The white man, seated

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among them, scented danger as he might have scented a beast, yet realized that he was powerless to do any more than look and listen. For, so long as they did nothing but sulk, he could do nothing but wait.

He finished his pipe, and, going within the tent, doubled his mackinaw around his boots, put them under his head for a pillow, and rolled himself in his blankets, with his feet toward the fire. Through the flap before him, he could see his companions still squatting in the places they had occupied for the last hour. Chronologically his mind took up the events that had transpired from the day they had started northward until now; their willingness on the first stretch of the journey, and their increasing unfriendliness as the hostile moccasin tracks grew fresher as each day passed. Then had come the tentative mutiny of the morning, and the sullen energy that had marked the rest of the day.

That they were now conspiring in some occult way against him he was satisfied, even though they seemed not to look at anything

but the coals; but as to the method of their inter-communication of thought, he could fathom nothing. Should they decide to kill him, and return to the post, saying that he had lost his life in rapids or lake, he well knew his helplessness. A shot between his shoulders or a knife-thrust in his sleep could not be guarded against; and, even should they openly defy him, and turn backward, he could not hold them. But to the last he would try and drive them on, and when the crisis came he would meet it as seemed wisest. But now he must sleep. Knowing that he was at their mercy, and feeling, if he was doomed to the treacherous midnight blow, that it might as well fall now as at any other time, he closed his eyes, and in five minutes was sleeping, having the sub-consciousness, from time to time, that forms were creeping silently within the tent, and crawling under the covers beside him. Three hours passed, and the midnight silence of the forest hung heavily. The fire had burned itself into impotence, and the darkness was almost a solid.

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From the edge of the row of sleepers within the tent the head of a Cree arose serpent-fashion, as he intently listened to the breathings of his fellows. Then, with a light touch upon the body of his nearest companion, he noiselessly rolled beneath the side of the shelter into the darkness without. A few yards away he arose, hearkened again, and then with his moccasined feet falling feather-like upon the trail, he seized a pack from out of the darkness, and bore it to one of the beached canoes. Ten minutes later he felt, rather than heard, another presence by his side, and a smothered grunt told him who the new-comer was. In the next twenty minutes the two remaining guides had joined them, and with infinite caution the packs were placed within the birch crafts. Then, as a mink slips into the water, they floated the canoes, and crept into them. A few soundless sweeps of the paddles, and out upon the ink-black surface of the lake the deserters shot, their faces pointed southward in the direction from which they had come.

CHAPTER II

AS the first gray rays of dawn filtered through the forest roof, and filled the tent, the white man sat up. His first glance about the blanketless shelter aroused his worst suspicions; his second, from the opening in the canvas, confirmed them. He walked to the lake, and peered into the mist that hung over the water in a smothering pall. No sound came from behind the gray curtain, and he bent over the moccasin tracks upon the shore. The dew in them told him that his guides had departed hours before. The length of time that had elapsed since their departure, however, was of no moment. Once beyond rifle-shot, their distance mattered not; for, canoeless, he could not pursue. He was deserted, without a water craft, and with a hundred miles of intervening lakes between him and the backward land trail.

Helplessly he turned back to the camp of the night before, a great wrath burning in his bosom

Briefly he took an inventory of what they had left him. His gun and a limited amount of ammunition he had kept close beside him; and these articles had not been molested. The blankets in which he slept had, of course, remained untouched, and his knife was still in his belt. A few ounces of the venison killed the day before was before the fire, spitted upon a stick, but outside of these things, the tent, and a few pocket articles, such as a compass, a pipe, a small amount of tobacco, and a burning glass, the deserters had stripped him clean. And of what remained, the tent was a useless thing to him. He found himself standing in the midst of a vast wilderness, without food, without salt, without ax or hatchet, and with but a paltry half-dozen matches in his pouch. He sank moodily upon a log as he mentally cast up his prospects.

To return over the tortuous course of

water and trail, he must first, of all things, have a canoe. He had never built one of these small craft, had never even seen one built, yet there was plenty of birch and pitch at hand, and with his knife he could in the course of a few days construct something that would float and bear him up as well. It would be but a burlesque affair at best, cumbersome and lop-sided; a wallowing thing in the water and a cross upon his shoulders by land; yet it would float him where he could not walk, and he could walk with it where it would not float, and so turn and turn about they could take each other back. But in the meantime he must hunt much for food upon which to live, and the return would take him a month at least. On the other hand, a fortnight of rapid travel, ahead and overland, would bring him to the post for which he was bound, provided, of course, that he could find game on the way, and keep his feet upon the right trail. As for the game, it lay in one direction as plentiful or as scarce as in another, and his chances of finding it

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were equally good whichever way he went. But the keeping of the unknown trail was an entirely different matter. True, he had a compass and maps, but the maps were full of lies, and the manifold trails of the forest as insidiously misleading as the tongue of a false woman. On all sides they branched away into the wilderness, starting nowhere, ending nowhere, seductive in their promises, yet leading only to destruction. Still, he was a fair woodsman, and might be able to hold his course, and the thought of retreat galled him to the quick. He determined to go ahead, trusting to fortune and his own efforts to reach the post.

He folded his blankets into a compact roll, and with a strip of canvas cut from the tent made a head strap with which to carry them. The tent itself he decided to leave behind by reason of its bulk and weight, preferring to trust to natural coverings to protect him. He cooked the small remaining piece of meat, thrust it in his pocket, picked up his gun, and started.

The sun was above the trees, the night mist gone, and the air sweet with the perfume of fresh green things. The silence was absolute, and for hours the only signs of life that he saw were a few scurrying chipmunks and a whisky-jack that flitted companionably beside him for miles along the way. With the exception of a brief rest in the middle of the day, he traveled steadily until night, then, finding a place where the cedars bent low, he cut a few branches for his bed, and laid his blankets upon them. Afterward he ate his cooked meat cold, going without a fire to economize matches.

Wrapped in his blankets, and with no covering but the branches above him, he slept well, but cat-like. Twice he was awakened, the first time by his ears to hear a buck that had winded him, snorting and whistling through the blackness; the second time by that mystic sixth sense which like a guardian angel hovers over those who inhabit great solitudes. Subtly warned of the presence of something that was unfriendly to him, he

raised his head. He heard nothing, and smelled nothing, but a moment later caught the greenish glare of a pair of eyes that shone malevolently upon him from a short distance. Seizing a piece of dead wood he hurled it at the eyeballs, and they vanished like a light that is suddenly extinguished. Believing the animal to be a lynx who was merely satisfying his curiosity, he drew his rifle closer, thrust his knife into the ground close at hand, and slept again.

At dawn he was again journeying rapidly. Hunger had begun to growl in his stomach, but he tightened his belt and went slipping through the trees like a hurrying shadow. As afternoon came, the trail, which had hitherto been so well defined that a blind man might have felt it out, tapered almost to nothingness; but feeling sure that it would become plain again further on, he did not hesitate. Before and on all sides of him lay the great bodies of the forest's dead as they had fallen singly from old age, or in windfalls where they had been mowed down in some fierce

battle with the elements. Often their moss-covered bodies crushed beneath his weight, and he sank knee-deep in the mold. Tangled labyrinths of new growth, fighting for room in which to grow, turned him into détours every few rods. Pine and spruce, cedar and balsam, birch and hemlock, hemmed him in almost like the bars of a prison, and through them he crept and climbed. Hunger was gnawing at him incessantly, but he had no thought of hunting now, for the noise of his progress would have warned away any game that lay within half a mile. Two hours he traveled like this, then he emerged upon the shore of a small lake, and stood at the edge of its waters with the perspiration streaming from his face and his breast rising and falling rapidly. He seated himself upon a boulder for a brief rest.

From the flat rock where he sat the smooth bosom of the lake beckoned him with a siren lure. Its diamond transparency fascinated him, and its coolness set his temples athrob. He arose, cast off his clothes, and stood

poised on the rock, heels together, and arms upraised—a wonderful thing to look upon. The muscles of his neck branching downward, pillar-like, ran into the shoulders of a perfect athlete. Small of waist and flank, symmetrical of limb, magnificently developed, his iron muscles ran smoothly beneath a skin which, below the tan of his throat, was as white as a child's. Poised at the waters' edge, and outlined against them, he was as perfect a specimen of the physical man as sculptor ever saw in his dreams.

He leaped in a long half-circle, struck the water with a cutting sound, and disappeared in the center of a small whirlpool, and a circle of wavelets that ran rippling far across the mirror-like surface. Wider and smaller the ripples ran until they dwarfed to mere wrinkles, and the bosom of the lake lay unruffled again. In the long minute that followed, no sign of the vanished one could have been seen; then far out from the shore his face reappeared, and he turned idly upon his back as he drew the fresh air to the bot-

tom of his lungs and floated with slight, fin-like movements of his hands. For a minute or more he rested, buoyant as an otter, then with a roll upon his side came lunging shoreward.

Steadily, with long, piston-like strokes, one muscular arm arose from the water near his hip, reached forward beyond his head, and there disappeared below the surface to swing backward, broad palm extended, as an oar sweeps. Deeply buried straight down in the lake the other arm swung as powerfully, and at each kick of his legs, his body shot forward like a darting fish. Towards the rocks he came with a rolling motion, plowing up the water with his head, and leaving a broad, swirling wake of foam behind, until, reaching the place of landing, he clambered out and stood glistening in the sunlight. Then over his body he went with his hands in a hard massage until the glisten had departed and the white skin blushed pink as the refreshed blood raced beneath it. After that he dressed, picked up his pack, and feeling as

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vigorous as when he had awakened in the morning, and with his hunger well-nigh forgotten for the moment, he searched about until he found an ancient hatchet blaze upon a pine that stood beside a pathway. Unhesitatingly he took the runway.

The ways of the forest are mysterious: its decrees often merciless; its purposes inscrutable. It is creator, executioner, tyrant, and slave. The life which it bears it starves, gluts, sacrifices, or shields as suits its whim. In the cities a man may often hunger within an arm's length of plenty, and in the wilderness he may as readily famish with fat game lying in nearly every covert. This is dependent upon the moods of the mother forest; her winds, her calms, her rains, her drouths, her snows, and minor things. In the present case she not only chose to lead the wanderer further astray, but to famish him as well.

For four days he had eaten nothing but berries, and during those days he had been hopelessly lost. With cool logic and a skill

that was not inconsiderable, he had chosen his way with compass and map and close scrutiny of the paths trodden, his course ever leading true until at the end of a long day's run the trail ended abruptly in a huge black burning, where all vestige of it was lost. Fire-swept and blackened, clogged with charred trunks and carpeted deep with ashes, it stretched before him a hideous scar upon the fair bosom of the Northland; its desolation rendered infernal by the grotesquely distorted stumps and seared poles, that had once been great trees, but which now arose like the flame-blackened masts of a mighty fleet.

Upon this burning were the countless tracks of the animals that had crossed it, the dainty deer hoof, the broad cloven imprint of the moose, the more human-like track of the bear and the fainter signatures of the fox and grouse. Carefully he had wound his way around the edge of this horror, until at last satisfied that he had picked up the trail on the further side, he had hurried on

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only later to find himself standing in the midst of the wilderness, with all ways sealed before him. Then almost on his hands and knees he had gone backward over the trail as he tried to read its secret, scanning it as closely as one does a faintly written manuscript. But its necromancy baffled him, and thereafter he had followed seductive, false leads that had led him astray far into nowhere, until at last running across a well-trodden game path he had followed it, well knowing that it led him points of the compass aside from his course, yet hoping against reason that it might by some sudden turn cross the main trail once more. Meanwhile he had starved.

But his inability to find game was little fault of his—better hunters had often fared worse when the woodland cast its magic against them. The season had been one of drouth and stillness, and parched day had followed parched day in a calm that was death-like. At such times even the cunningest human foot cannot go into the brush

where the game lies without snapping sentinel twigs that cry aloud their warnings, and in such silences sound carries indefinitely. Thus notified of his approach when he was still far distant, the game slunk away, and each night the hunter had gone to his blankets with famine's face one day nearer his own. Hope was beginning to leave him, but his courage abated not. It is a long trail that has no turning, and his strength, berry-aided, would serve him faithfully for a long time yet. Neither did his hunger torment him as much as it had in the first forty-eight hours. The first acute gnawings had given place to lesser pains, and literally his stomach was but a dull, aching void.

The fifth day found him traveling a high bank whose sheer side fell to a narrow stream fifty feet below. He had left much weight along the weary miles that lay behind him and he leaned further forward as he walked, but the elasticity of his step told of the wonderful reserve power that was still within

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him. The skin upon his forehead was drawn tight as a drum and furrows had gathered about the corners of his blue eyes, yet their steady clearness was that of perfect mental and physical vigor. His month's growth of beard filled the hollows of his cheeks, but through it the contour of his face could still be seen in its strong and clear-cut outlines. Not a trace of a human being had he seen since the departure of the Crees, and in the long days and nights of his loneliness he had often felt as though he lived in a world apart from all mankind; destined to wander an eternity through manless forests and past lakes that glistened opalescent in the sun or shimmered ghostly under the stars. The days were endlessly monotonous, but the nights were often made vivid by his dreams. In fact, often as he plodded through ferns and sweeping brakes in the death-like solitude, he could not separate his dream of the night before from the actuality of the day at hand; and so pronounced was this mirage of the mind that to all intents he lived more realis-

tically in his slumbers than in his hours of ceaseless traveling.

From the gorge below him suddenly there rang a cry that tightened his muscles like harp-strings and brought him to a halt as though he had run against a wall. He had heard strange voice-like calls before in his wanderings; sounds at which even the Indians shrugged their shoulders in mystification, but the note that vibrated in his ears was human beyond all possibility of mistake. For a full minute he listened, then hearing nothing more threw himself upon his stomach and went crawling through the bushes that framed the steep bank. Then with the stealth of a panther lying perdu he thrust his head over the edge.

Fifty feet below him a river, pebble-bordered, ran through the gorge, and a quarter of a mile up the stream he saw that for which he looked. At a broad bend, where the current had bitten deep into the bank, a dozen Indian children were frolicking in the water, a medley of brown legs and shining

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black heads, while as many more rolled in the sand upon the beach. Beyond the bend the haze of campfires was visible as it drifted down the gorge. Cat-eyed he watched them.

That it was a nomadic village of Ojibways he made no question. Bands of that tribe were scattered through this lone land, hunters and trappers of wild things; Ishmaelites among all people, and knowing no restraint but the restraint of hope or fear. Although not at open war against the Crees, their venom fangs were always raised against them, and the white man who violated their domain they viewed with sullen disfavor.

In the spring they came soft-footed from the woods, and with grunts laid their pelts upon the counters before the factor, trading them for blankets, baubles, guns, and ammunition, and this done they vanished like shadows into the forest to be seen no more for another year. Wandering white trappers had at times fallen in with them, and had sometimes come back to their friends

unscathed and with tales of hospitable treatment and friendships done them, but as many more voyageurs who had crossed their trail had returned not at all, or if at all with stories of theft and horrible brutalities inflicted. For a stranger and an alien to enter their camp was to take his life in the hollow of his hand, and desperate indeed must the wood-runner be who ventured it.

But the condition of the one who now watched was desperate in the extreme. He was half-starved, and his great strength was running from him as water runs from melting snow. He was astray in a wilderness so vast that it might take months to work his way out, even though he found stomach fuel enough to keep the fires of life burning. And once his small supply of ammunition was exhausted, he must starve to a verity. In the village ahead of him lurked a great danger, it was true, but food was there as well, and if one must die it is better to perish while seeking that which would save him than in running away from it. Thinking thus, he

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lay in the bushes until the sun dropped behind the trees and the first fold of dusk threw itself over him like an invisible net. When at last the children emerged from the water and ran campward, the man arose with his plans laid.

He had been a wayfarer of the world and knew the superstitions and lore of many of its peoples. Unwritten laws are still speciously argued before the grave judges of civilized states, and the tribes of the wilderness know no other kind. And these unwritten laws are more than tribal. They are inter-tribal, often continent-wide in their sweep, and those who abide close to nature know and enforce them. In the lumber camps of the white man in the great woods there are several of these unscribed edicts, but the chief of them is this:

“Whoever comes into camp from off the snows shall be given food and shelter from sun to sun without money and without price, be his skin white, black, or red. Nor shall question be asked of him, nor detaining hand

be laid upon him during the hours that intervene."

Among the Northern Indians this unwritten law of the whites holds sway in the garb of a superstition, old beyond man's knowledge, its birth hidden beneath the mold of dead centuries. Its origin no one knows, but some tribes, speaking of it, say this:

Unkowa, the spirit of charity, coming at dusk as an unknown wanderer into a village, made the lost sign and asked for food. He wore the head-dress and carried the arrows of another tribe, therefore those to whom he appealed stripped him and beat him to death with their bows. Whereupon he arose from the dead in his true form, and upbraiding them for their cruelty cast the spell of famine upon them, and beneath it they died like locusts in a storm of hail. Other tribes believe that the miracle happened in other ways, but few of them question its authenticity. But be the legend true or false, whoever wanders into an Indian camp between the mystic hours of dusk and

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sunrise is almost certain to be looked upon askance as the possible reincarnation of the returned spirit, who has come among them again to see if they still remember. And while they may not accept him unequivocally as Unkowa, and may possibly even repudiate or mistreat him, they do it with secret tremblings and the cold fear in their hearts that he may be the avenger after all. Therefore, they are more likely to give him the benefit of the doubt and provide for him during the charmed hours lest disaster come upon them. But should he linger after the rising of the sun, all doubt as to his supernatural character vanishes, and from then on they accord him the treatment of a mortal.

With this superstition in mind, the voyageur keenly scanned the gorge before him. From near its bottom a cedar arose, its upper branches touching the ledge where he lay. It was but a short leap into its top, and after a moment's calculation he made it without effort. Then down its branches he went until he stood among the lower limbs, a

dozen feet above the sand. Rifle in hand he poised himself carefully, setting his nail-shod shoes firmly upon the branch, and retaining his balance by clinging to a higher limb as he crouched.

Beneath his clothes his steel muscles knotted, and the pupils of his eyes contracted to small points as he fixed them upon the exact spot where he would alight. His poise and assurance were perfect. In them was portrayed the conscious power of a great leaper, a panther, a lynx, an acrobat of the flying rings. Slowly he settled himself—then leaped.

It seemed an almost effortless act, more like an involuntary snap of all the muscles as they united on the instant to lift and propel his body forward than as the result of tremendous exertion; yet no unpracticed man could have accomplished it. Its execution was that of one to whom leaping is an exact science wherein are joined in perfect unison the full powers of calf and thigh, arms and shoulders, in the instantaneous release of

their concentrated strength. Upon the sand he alighted, and for a few yards seemed to skim along its surface as a leaf wind-blown. Then he stopped and looked over his shoulder. His tracks, suddenly appearing in the midst of the sand, seemed to have started magically. Around them was the soft sand beach, over which the lightest-footed man could not have come without leaving his imprint, and when he looked up at the branch from which he had launched himself, and surveyed the distance from it to the first footprint, he smiled in self-satisfaction. The mystery of those suddenly appearing tracks would have puzzled a scientist, while to the Indian mind, already half prepared for the supernatural, it might well seem miraculous. Towards the camp he set forth with a swinging stride in which there was neither haste nor loitering.

At the turn in the gorge he came within sight of it, lying a hundred paces away. Two-score of tepees stood on the bank, which here, gently sloping, ran back to the scattering edge of the forest. Several small fires had

been started, and over them women were bending as they prepared the evening meal. Hovering back of the women and impatient with hunger lurked the forms of the children, while circling about both were wolf-faced dogs, that sniffed at the pots and showed red tongues as they yawned. Before the tepees the bucks were gathered in small groups, the indifference of their attitude belied by the steadiness of their gaze upon the fires. In the hush of evening the wanderer's ears caught their guttural voices.

For the first few steps after his appearance around the bend he remained unnoticed; then from one of the slinking pot-watchers there arose an excited yelp, closely followed by a wild canine outburst, the startled scream of a child, and the jabber of women quickly subsiding before a few harsh commands from the men. Unhesitatingly the intruder came towards them, kicking the dogs from his legs, while as he drew nearer the women and children went scampering into the tepees, and the men, who at first sight of him had half-

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risen, now relaxed and viewed his approach with silent watchfulness. Among them he passed with no sign of recognition and approaching the largest tepee paused for a second before it. Its flap was down but unfastened, and through the narrow opening he could dimly discern the interior. To have hesitated longer or to have asked permission to enter would have indicated timidity to the Indian mind, so, throwing aside the flap, he boldly entered.

Seated upon a pile of skins and looking at him with the impassiveness of a mummy, he saw a very old man, while not far from his side crouched a young woman whose wide black eyes and parted lips betrayed the half wonder, half fear which possessed her. A glance told him that she had been braiding her hair, for two plaited strands already hung apart from the dark wealth that screened part of her oval face. With a swift mental comment that she was astonishingly good to look at for an Indian girl, he turned his attention again to the man. The face was wrinkled

and incredibly old-looking, roughly and carelessly hewn, and set with small, cunning eyes that glittered like jade beads. This much the intruder saw with the first sweep of his eyes, and looking no further just then, laid his rifle down and seated himself at the entrance.

“How,” he said indifferently.

The old man grunted.

CHAPTER III

THROUGH the opening in the tepee he saw the women and children come crawling out of their places of refuge and crouch before the dwellings, in the manner of prairie dogs that reappear from their holes after a sudden fright. A moment later, half a dozen of the young men seized their bows and went hurrying down the gorge in the direction from which he had come, and he knew they were following his back trail and would presently reach the spot where it began at his leap from the tree. He did not believe they would be able to solve its mystery in the semi-darkness, and counted upon that belief as an additional safeguard.

Within the lodge where he sat, all was silence. The old man had not stirred since his entrance, but the girl had shrunk a little further from the opening, and now crouched like a cornered wild thing, with her back

against the skins of the shelter. Her moccasins, leggings, skirt, and blouse were of buckskin ornamented with beads and stained porcupine quills, while from her neck hung a string of small blue stones. Her arms, bare to the elbows, were as round and shapely as any he had ever seen, and her hands were neat, perfect. Judging her as she sat, she seemed to be of medium height and half-girlish build, and guessing at her age, he blindly put it at seventeen. Her hair was thick and long, shining like polished mahogany; her eyes large and deep and swept by heavy lashes that shaded them as ferns shade dark forest pools. The skin of her face and arms was almost of an olive tint and smoothness, and with the perfect oval of her face she might, under other conditions, have easily passed for a daughter of Italy or Spain, or, more likely yet, as a Creole of the lagoons. He had never seen a beautiful Indian woman, never expected to see one, and did not now as a result of his analysis pronounce this one beautiful.

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To his mind beautiful women were only to be found among the civilized races, where refinement lurked in every poise, and culture and understanding shone from the eyes. He had seen half wild women before who had hair that glistened gloriously; who had skins of silk-like smoothness; whose features were beyond criticism; and whose forms were beyond reproach: but he had always classed them as superb physical creatures who were merely exceedingly pleasing to the eye. Always they had lacked the something which, to him, would have made them really beautiful; the undefinable expression that comes only from knowledge and cultivation; the polish that gives depth and luster to the crude gem; and so thinking, he had silently remarked that they were pretty creatures, but nothing more. The girl before him now, he told himself, was susceptible of beauty, and placed in the right environment for a few years might attain it in one of its manifold forms, but as yet it was only potential. There was a certain lack-luster in her eyes that betrayed the

unenlightened mind lying back of them, and the sweetness of culture was entirely absent from the rich-lipped mouth. Her face was mechanically beautiful, but that was all.

He slowly turned his gaze once more to the old man's face and met the steady eyes point to point. Old, harrowed, filled with infinite shrewdness, it was the face of a man inexpressibly wise in the lore of the wilderness and with great possibilities of both wolf savagery and fox cunning. He was clothed in a buckskin shirt and moccasins and the coarse trousers of the trading-posts. Beside him stood a rust-specked rifle apparently unused for months; eloquent witness of ammunition long since expended. Several bows and arrow-sheaths lay about, and a small broken mirror hung by a buckskin thong against the center pole. Outside of these things, the blankets and skins that covered the ground, there was little else to warrant attention.

He glanced out of the opening again and through the rapidly brewing darkness saw the

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return of the searchers of his trail. They were coming silently with heads bowed and right hands held against their breasts in some sign that was meaningless to him. He became conscious of a slight movement on the part of the chief, and looked towards him. The inscrutability of the mask-like face was gone, and deep wonder and respect were in its stead. As for the girl, she had drawn a blanket over her face and he heard her chanting low behind it. Outside the tepee the stillness of death had fallen.

For many minutes they sat thus, and then the old man arose and passed stealthily without. In front of the lodge he raised his hands and uttered a few words. Instantly the children disappeared and the women sprang to the fires, feeding them afresh until once more their red tongues licked about the cooking pots. Beside the largest of these the chief threw the blanket from his shoulders, and turning to his guest, pointed down at it. With a nod the traveler got upon his feet, and walking to the fire, took his seat at

the place indicated. Upon the other end of the coverlet the old man squatted, while several of the elders of the tribe ranged about the kettle on the opposite side. A number of large horn and metal spoons stood upward in the pot, and choosing one of these the guest began to eat, his companions immediately following his example. About them the women and children, curiosity-filled, noiselessly gathered.

The visitor found himself eating of a stew brewed from the miscellaneous small game of the forest, seasoned with berries and unfamiliar herbs. It was slightly acrid, but substantial tasting, and had it been salted a bit he would have asked for nothing better. But, with the first few mouthfuls swallowed, his hunger raged so fiercely that he had no further thought than the filling of his empty stomach, and from thence on he ate with the untasting speed of the half-starved. Ten minutes and they had scraped the pot to its bottom, leaving him not as fully gorged as he would have liked to be, yet realizing that he

had eaten enough for one meal. Quickly the women and children emptied their separate vessels; then scouring them in the white sand of the river, rinsed them and set them bottoms upward to dry, while around the central fire the men of the entire camp came stealthily to stare at the one who had dropped upon them from out of the sky. By the firelight the visitor saw the dark face of the girl peeping at him from the opening in the tepee, the tips of her white teeth showing between her parted lips; her eyes shining as they reflected the firelight. For some reason which he did not understand she had not come forth to eat with the other women.

From a skin pouch as wrinkled and drawn as his own face, the old man drew a small portion of tobacco and dried willow and mixed them in the palm of his hand. Next, he filled a long-stemmed pipe, which he lighted with a coal, and after sending a puff floating upward, passed the bowl to the guest. Deliberately the white man took his whiff and passed it on, and so the peace emblem slowly

went the rounds of the circle until it arrived at the chief again. Then gravely the latter spoke.

With his smattering knowledge of Indian tongues the guest followed the drift of the address. The old man offered him peace and welcome in exchange for the honor he had bestowed upon them by his visit. It pained him that the food was not better and more plentiful; but the hunting-moon was dry and the young men had run far and wide with little more success than had they been women. The moose had flown into the skies; the deer had burrowed into the earth; the bears had hidden in the tree-tops, and for weeks the hunters had returned nearly empty-handed. Therefore they had all been compelled to live upon the cullings of the forest, rabbits, squirrels, porcupines, clams scraped from the streams, and now and then a fish speared as it slept on the surface. It was bad, very bad indeed, but the evil spirit of the drouth was master, and they must go half-hungry until the rains came and the forest could be

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traveled silently. But to such food as they had he must help himself to fullness. Self-dignity and respect for the guest were equally balanced in the explanation, and the latter acknowledged his understanding by nods.

By nature the Indian is usually silent. The hush of the woodland and prairie is bred in his bones, and their seal lies heavy upon his lips. Even the white man who dwells in lone places feels this spell and is loath to desecrate what seems to be the inner sanctuaries of the goddess of silence. When the wilderness traveler moves he goes on cautious feet, and when he must shatter the brooding silence by rifle or ax he does it with a sense of half-guilt; feeling much as one might who, alone at prayers, upsets a sacred image in the stillness of a cathedral.

The woods roysterer who goes blatant-voiced through the solitudes is no woodsman at all, but rather a soulless, profane creature with little sense of the eternal fitness of things. And while the red man may sometimes boast, his boastings will be long rather

than loud. His children laugh softly and cry subduedly, and even his women gossip the loudest scandal at the lowest pitch. Harsh noises they reserve for ceremonials, alarms, or to intimidate the enemy. Before that which they do not understand they sit silently.

In the presence of this stranger who had come to them within the charmed hours and in prophesied manner, after the old man's words of welcome to him, they spoke not at all. At the edge of the fire-lit circle they remained in silent scrutiny until the night had fallen heavily and the stars thickly spread the skies. Then, one by one, as wild things slip into their dens, they vanished into the tepees, the old chief following last of all with a motion of his arm which directed the guest to a nearby lodge. Entering it and finding it vacant, the voyageur unrolled his blankets and slept, stomach-full, for the first time in many days.

In the first gray of morning he awoke and raised his head. Already a pot was simmering without, and a couple of crone-like old

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women hovered over it. Close at hand by the river's edge he saw the girl balanced upon a boulder, a bow and arrow in her hands and her eyes fastened upon the water's surface. It was the first time that he had seen her standing erect, and his admiration of her was increased mightily by the sight. Nothing could have been more symmetrical than her lithe form, and her head, while small, had the shapeliness of an Egyptian queen's. Her poise, too, was a study in itself, in its alert fixedness, as she bent forward with parted lips and eyes that glowed with the excitement of her quest. Then, even as he admired, she drew the bow, and he heard the hiss of the arrow as it shot downward through the water. A moment later she smiled, and bending forward brought forth a bass firmly impaled.

She dressed the fish deftly upon a flat stone, washed it in the running stream, and going to the fire began to broil it within soaked leaves which she spread upon the embers. In the gray light she seemed almost

spirit-like, so noiselessly and lightly she moved. Nothing that he had ever seen, excepting possibly a young doe, had stepped with her freedom and natural grace, and by preference he would have lain there long and watched her. But remembering that he must be on his way before sun-up if he would preserve his incognito as a visitor from the unknown world, he arose, bathed his hands and face and re-rolled his blankets for the day's journey. When he straightened up from these tasks the girl stood before him, holding the cooked fish, smoking hot, upon a piece of clean bark. Her eyes were down-cast, and her thick black hair hung like a curtain before her face. In the humility of her posture she might have been a dark-skinned Marguerite before an altar.

Craving the offering though he did, yet knowing that she needed the food as much as he himself did, he would not have taken it had he not felt that to refuse her would humiliate and hurt her worse than hunger. Therefore he accepted the gift, laying one

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hand upon her arm as he did so, and feeling her shrink slightly under the touch like a half-frightened child.

With muttered words of thanks he smiled at her, and noted her eyes quickly rise and as quickly fall, as her cheeks became the color of a maple leaf turned golden by the frost. Then, without words, she turned and ran into the small tepee that stood close beside that of her father, and which he knew must be her own.

A fish that weighs three pounds when taken from the water makes but a small meal for a very hungry man; yet it is far better than nothing to eat at all. He ate it where she had given it to him, and feeling much the better for it, threw his blankets over his shoulders and picked up his gun. The women had retreated from the kettle and he knew that he was expected to help himself, but with a motion to them signifying that he had eaten enough, he left its contents untouched for their own mouths.

Up the valley in the rapidly increasing

light he went, and from the forest's rim turned for a last look at the place where he had found food, rest, and hospitality. Before the large tepee the old man stood motionless, the girl close beside him, slender, symmetrical; idealized in the early light. High in the air the departing one held his hand in the peace sign and the old warrior's arm signaled a quick response. Thus he left them, and turning into the forest, resumed his wanderings just as the first ray of sunlight, piercing the forest roof, warmed his cheek.

The delicate exhalations of fern, leaf, and moss filled the air in an incense offering to the god of light. In the cities, for a man to sniff at the air is but a mode of expressing disgust at what he smells. To him it means that the reek of alleys or abattoirs has awakened his dormant fifth sense, and he turns away wishing that he could smell not at all. Civilized man still sees as keenly as any living thing, hears fairly well, touches and tastes with a delicacy beyond that of almost

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any other animal, but is incapable of smelling little except stench. Noxious gases have deadened his olfactory nerves. Sulphurous smoke has thickened the sensitive lining of his nose, and his sense of smell has become practically unresponsive except to shock. Noseless he would be happier. But in the wilderness all is different.

There the smelling sense asserts itself and becomes man's sentinel and pleasure giver. Faintest of odors linger in it; the perfume of most green things; the aromatics of balsam and cedar; the sweetness of breezes blown across clear waters. Amidst such surroundings as these the voyageur now passed, his lungs filled with the aroma of the wood and his feet swept by dew-sprinkled ferns that arched low over his path.

A crash from a nearby thicket startled him, and his gun leaped to his shoulder in the involuntary response of his muscles. The forest was open here, with little underbrush and trees that stood tall and far apart. Across a glade he saw a large, tan-colored animal

disappearing straight ahead of him, rising and falling with the lightness of a bounding rubber ball. And so effortless and so deliberate were the motions that haste seemed the furthest thing from the mind of the fleeing one, yet the hunter knew that each one of those mighty bounds was carrying it from him at racehorse speed. Before the animal was a fallen tree-top eight feet high, and over the barrier it arose as a swallow skims a wave, horns laid back, white flag aloft, legs closely drawn under the belly. And at that instant the rifle cracked. Down upon the other side of the tree-top crashed the buck, his neck fairly broken by the bullet, and dead almost before he struck the ground. The man ran forward and bent over him.

The soft eyes were staring up but no light was in them, and no sign of life remained except in the quivering flanks. The slayer looked at him compassionately. The killing of innocent creatures was no pleasure to him; yet man must have meat in order to do the world's work, and the life of a deer is no

more sacred in creation's scheme than is the life of a sheep, a calf, or a swine. For since the stomach daily demands its pound of flesh with its gill of blood, what matters it whether the pound and the gill are taken from a beast of the forest or a beast of the field; a bird that flies or a fish that swims? For eventually nearly all the things that live must pass into that well-nigh universal tomb—the human stomach.

For the first time since his desertion by his guides the man had food in plenty and to spare. Not only could he now feast to the uttermost, but by drying and smoking strips of venison he could carry enough with him to satisfy his hunger for a week or more. But even should he do this, he must leave behind the greater portion of the two-hundred-pound animal where it lay for the gorging of the wandering creatures that ever were patrolling the woods, and this he disliked to do. His thoughts ran back to the village he had just left, with its half-fed women and children, dwelling long upon the memory of the slen-

der girl who had denied herself of her kill that he might be fed. And now, through sudden good fortune, he had meat enough for them all. He sat down upon the warm body of his slain, pondering deeply.

To return to the camp in the sunlight would be to dissociate himself forever in their minds from all thought of his superhuman character. Unkowa, the spirit, never reappeared at a village once visited, and should he go back now he would be received by the tribesmen as one from the ranks of their hereditary enemies. What they would do with him he could only conjecture. His clothing, his knife and blankets, and above all else his gun and ammunition would be of great value to them, and he would be as helpless as a babe in their midst. Should it be their whim to kill him for his valuables or for any other reason, they could do so with impunity; while, should they merely rob him and turn him loose, he must still suffer a lingering and terrible death from starvation. All these things he pondered over;

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then, thinking of the unselfishness of the girl, he once more got up on his feet.

He raised the front quarters of the deer, flung them over his shoulders and then worked his way under its body until it was balanced on his back. It was a heavy burden and an awkward one to bear, and he could have lessened its weight by many pounds had he drawn the carcass. But he had decided that even the dogs of the village should have their share in the feast to come. Bending like a drawn bow under the burden, he retraced his steps. He had not more than a mile to travel, and in half an hour he was plodding the valley again. A number of young men were just starting on their daily hunt, and at sight of him with his burden, they drew silently aside to watch him pass. In front of them he went without sign of recognition, not halting until he reached the chief's tepee, meeting the girl fairly at the entrance. With a deep breath of relief that the task was ended, he sent the buck tumbling at her feet.

CHAPTER IV

A MONTH passed. From the evergreen mantle that clothed the hillside here and there sprang, over night, splotches of crimson that flamed gorgeously against their background, as rubies flame from a setting of emeralds. These splotches were the maples as they flushed angrily at the nip of the frost; for Jack-o'-the-North is a sly prowler who chooses the tenderest prey first while he is teething in the autumn. In the still mornings, the bosoms of the lakes were heavily draped by mists, and through the smother there often came the splashings of the wild-fowl as they arose from their night's repose to work their way by easy stages southward. Along the forest streams the young men of the tribe were busily searching for signs of beaver, mink, and otter; and already their snares and deadfalls were craftily stretched along the runways of the forest.

The autumn, the harvest season of game and pelts, was hard at hand, and upon the garnering thereof depended the comforts or privations of the fierce winter to come. Many caches of jerked venison must be made; roots, herbs, and nuts were to be stored, winter lodges constructed, warm hides tanned for coverings, thick garments, moccasins, and leggings provided to replace those worn thin in the summer days. Also, there were snowshoes to be woven, fish to be smoked and dried for use when storm howled to wolf, and wolf to storm; and when the hunting was bad and fishing useless. Then, too, hundreds of arrows must be shaped, each one perfect, to be used upon the great flights of wild-fowl which would soon be whistling overhead. All this became imperative work, as well as other minor things, and taken all in all, the camp was a busy one.

These preparations the white man idly witnessed or took part in as the occasion seemed to demand. To all intents and purposes he was a prisoner, and that he was allowed a

certain freedom of movement was only due to the fact that they had taken his gun from him, and knowing him to be unskilled in the use of the bow, had no fear that he would run weaponless away to certain starvation in the forest. Why they had desired him to remain among them was partly due to the peculiar workings of the Indian mind, incomprehensible to a white man; and partly because he was more or less of a mystery to them, and therefore a thing of interest to be kept and studied. For although he could now make himself fairly well understood in their simple tongue, there were certain things which he could not or would not explain to their satisfaction—for instance, the manner of his appearing out of the air upon the sand, the indefiniteness of his mission in these far woods, and his voluntary return to the camp with the deer; and these were mysteries which they could only hope to solve through keeping him amongst them. Therefore, they detained him as one who, to a certain extent, was under suspicion, but who as uncon-

victed, was still entitled to respect. Added to all this was the fact that the old chief had become much interested in him, and craftily cultivated him for the sake of the information which he daily gained thereby.

Evening after evening he would motion the white man to his fireside, and as the latter's knowledge of the language grew and he could communicate more freely, the old man pried him with questions, fox-like in their cunning, as he sought to draw from him more of the ways of the white race which he knew was sweeping the continent as the rising tide sweeps a beach. Such questions as he cared to answer the newcomer made reply to, while those he wished to evade he dismissed with a shrug of his shoulders which indicated that he did not understand.

In these long, broken talks, when they squatted upon the skins with the firelight flickering over them, the girl, sitting close by and almost never making a sound, listened to the stranger's wonder-tale of his own people with the rapt eagerness of a child who is

awed to speechlessness by tales of wizardry. Often, as he glanced at her suddenly, he would see her start as their eyes met, and could not help but notice her embarrassment in the sudden drop of her lids and the involuntary twitch of her hand. Her shyness amused him as her grace and physical perfections attracted, and he would have liked it far better could he have sat beside her with her lips to question him and her ears alone to listen. But always the old man sat between them, and it would have been a mortal affront to have crossed, uninvited, the barrier which he put between them. Therefore, he but looked at her as he talked to her father; or at other times when their tongues lagged, smiled at her as he mystified them with feats of juggling or sleight-of-hand that made the eyes of the old man glisten and brought her to her hands and knees in the attitude of one who is charmed by the working of miracles.

And then, one day, he unconsciously gave them a fright. Desiring a fire, he gathered a handful of dry moss and bark, and the sun

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being bright he focused his burning-glass upon the tinder. In a moment it had burst into flame; and at that uncanny wonder, those who had drawn about in curiosity turned away and crept into their tepees to cover their heads.

Arising from the blaze and somewhat astonished at the effect he had caused, he turned his head just in time to see the girl, who had drawn near to see what strange new feat he was about to perform, sink upon the ground before him with her face in the grass. With the thoughts of a civilized man who sees a woman fall before him, and whose instincts are to assist her and nothing more, he bent and raised her in his arms. Beyond a convulsive movement at his first touch she remained still, and he drew her close to him as he sought to bring her feet beneath her that she might support herself. Through her thin garments he could feel her warm form almost as through a single covering of silk; and instinctively his clasp tightened as he drew her lips to his own and kissed them as

he might have kissed a white-skinned woman who nestled so close. It was but a fleeting impulse; the involuntary tribute of the purely physical side of his nature to her own, but at that close pressure she gasped, and for an instant lay in his arms like a lifeless thing; then suddenly grew tense and quivering. For a moment he held her there, then realizing what he did, he released her and stepped backward. Her eyes were wide and startled; her form swaying; her lips trembling; then, with a low cry that was almost a moan, she turned from him and ran into her tepee. Glancing around, he saw that none had observed them, and went back to the nursing of his fire, with a heart that still beat much faster than it had for many days.

Beneath his breath he berated himself savagely for his act. He had held her to him; had kissed her ardently; and she would undoubtedly misconstrue the fleeting impulse into a great desire on his part to possess her; to take her to his tepee and there own her as his wife. He had no desire to wound her,

and still less to experience the fury of a savage woman scorned. Therefore, he must placate her gently until she comprehended that his act had merely been one of approval of her good looks, and that no idea of possession lay behind it. Once understanding this and knowing that he admired her, her vanity having been tickled, she would undoubtedly be content to let it go at that. The faculties of savage pride, passion, and hate, he accorded her to the utmost; but the divine gift of pure love he denied her. To his mind, savage women could not love in the sense of the word as he understood it. True, she could be fond of her own, as the wolf mother is fond of her cubs and mate, and undoubtedly would as fiercely defend them; but love pure and deep, self-obliterating and self-sacrificing, she was incapable of possessing in her present state. Therefore, had he transgressed, he would have but to appease her vanity to be forgiven.

In the dim light of the next morning, Niska, the big young hunter who now shared

the tepee with him, touched him on the shoulder.

"Come," said he. "The fog lies thick upon the water, and many geese float under it. We will creep upon them, and be within bow-shot when the light comes."

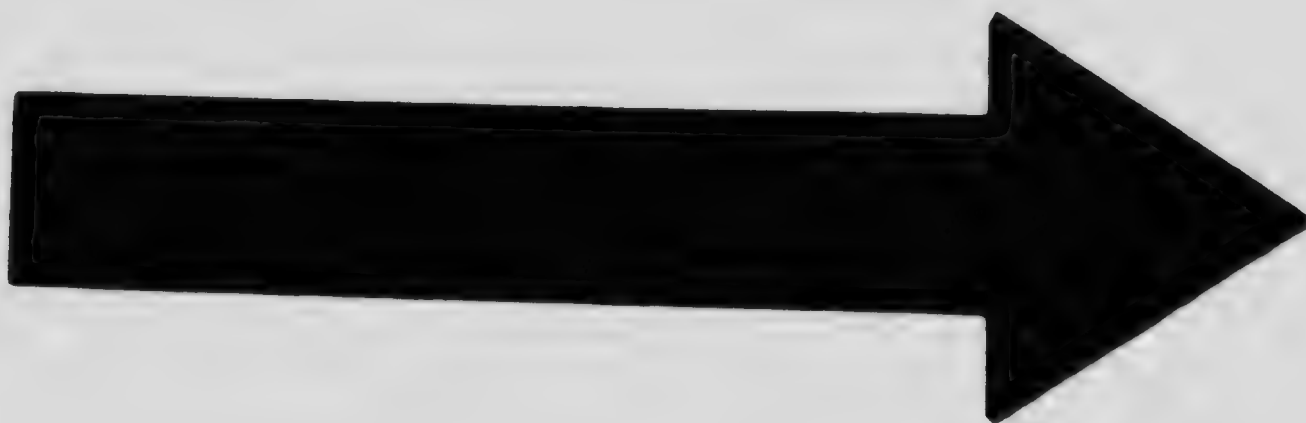
Although the white man was of no value to them with the bow, he had proven useful in other ways, such as the carrying of dead game and the retrieving of arrows that had missed their mark; thus leaving the hunters unincumbered. In the chill and mist of the morning they were met outside their lodge by a dozen other young men, and together they passed into the forest. The trails were slippery with frost, and the drenched brush soaked them to the skins as they crawled through it. Wet and shivering they passed rapidly on, and at last emerged from the woods upon the shores of a lake where the ripples broke mournfully.

In the low east the sun hung, a faint, nebulous ball, barely discernible through the fog; red-tinted, as though seen through heavy

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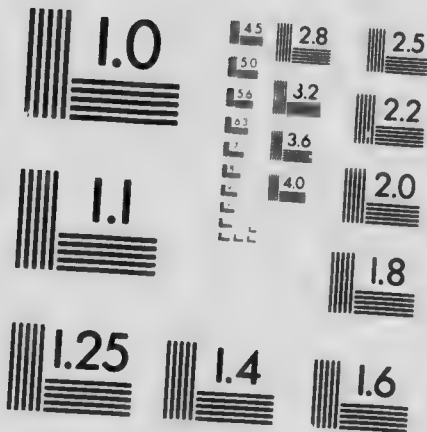
smoke. Into the mist the eye could penetrate but a few yards, but behind the gray curtain and but a short distance away could be heard the drowsy voices of floating geese, brant, and duck. With the noiselessness of specters the hunters ranged themselves in a semicircle around the narrow bay which held the fowl, and there seating themselves, waited for the arrows of the sun to penetrate the vapor. To the white man, shivering beside Niska, came first a thought and then a resolve.

Cautiously arising, he disrobed until he stood naked in the raw air. With silent curiosity the Indian watched him, his surprise turning into astonishment as his companion, stepping into the lake until the water was up to his thighs, gently lowered himself and vanished into the fog with the noiselessness of a mink. With a grunt that was the superlative of wonderment the Ojibway remained squatting and motionless; eyes bent upon the mist curtain, ears strained, his bow in readiness. He was a strange man, this white man, and full of mysteries which no Indian could



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hope to understand. What new miracle he was about to perform the squatting one had no conception.

As for the swimmer, after the first shock of his submersion, he felt more comfortable than he had upon the land. The water was warmer than the air, and each movement of arm or leg sent the blood faster through his veins. Knowing as he did his prowess in the water, he had determined on an experiment which, if successful, would prove of practical value, and which, if it failed, could do little harm. Scarcely faster than if he had floated in a slow current he propelled himself along, guided by the faint sounds of the drowsy wild-fowl, now close ahead. Thirty yards out from the bank a shapeless gray object suddenly appeared floating closely before him, and drawing his breath, he sank.

With his body but barely below the surface he swam on until he saw a dark object upon the water directly over him; then, thrusting up one hand, he caught the dangling legs, and with a swift pull jerked the bird below

the surface. With a twist of his hand he wrung its neck, and thrust his head into the air. The surprise to the sleeping one had been complete and no sound save a faint splash had been made. Back upon the bank the listening Ojibway had caught it, but had supposed it to be merely the flap of a wing upon water. Close about, the companions of the victim dozed on suspicionless.

Twice more he repeated the feat with equal success, and then, as the mist lifted rapidly, he turned shoreward. From the rushes he arose, glistening, and dropped his prey before the amazement-stricken Niska. The friction of a hard rub with his hands quickly dried him, and feeling warm once more, he clothed himself. The Indian, gazing at him with steady eyes, said nothing, but his admiration was boundless.

Swept aside by the first breath of the day the mist vanished, and upon the bosom of the lake scores of wild-fowl were revealed. Like panthers the crouching men arose, and the air vibrated to the twang of bow-strings as

to a harp swept broadcast by a hand. Hissing as though red hot, the arrows sped, and a dozen great birds lay upon the water, beating it in their death throes, before the rest of the flock arose in thunderous flight. Half as many more victims fell in the volley of pursuing darts, and then the flock, now far beyond bowshot, separated in great wheeling circles. Back into the screening rushes the slayers sank and waited.

From over the distant tree-tops where they had vanished, a portion of them reappeared in wheeling return flight. Swiftly they circled the shore of the lake, lured back by some strange fascination to the place where death had found them. At tremendous speed they came, and once more the air was filled with the shrill beat of their wings. Lying upon their backs and shooting straight upward that the arrows which missed might be recovered, the Ojibways loosened their shafts once more, and the dull thud and splash of heavy bodies falling upon land and water told of the skill of the archers.

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In the hour that followed, several other flocks had been drawn back over the danger spot by that irresistible impulse which seems so often to govern their kind, and then they flew away to return no more. The hunting for the morning was over, and the slayers, laden with their game, turned toward the tamarack swamp that lay close at hand at the outlet of the lake. Here the shallow water of the creek had frozen beneath the cold of some nights before, and in this impenetrable shade they would scarcely thaw before spring. In the frozen ooze they dug a hole and in it deposited their prey, and covering it with moss, left it there with the knowledge that it would soon freeze solidly and that it could be chopped out as emergency demanded in the winter days to come. This was but the first of the cold-storage plants which they would make, and from which they would draw supplies upon demand when no fresh food fell before their arrows and hunger ran them close. This done, they returned to the village.

The feat of swimming beneath the water

and pulling down the fowl established the reputation of the one who had performed it beyond impeachment. "Onoto the loon," the wondrous diver, they christened him; and almost like a father the old chief drew him to his own fire, where he meditated long before he spoke.

"That you were born white instead of an Ojibway is a great mystery," he said at length. "Yet your coming to us in your wise manhood, instead of as a foolish child born in our tents, proves that you were consecrated to our welfare from the beginning. And an Ojibway you shall become, by blood as well as by spirit. You shall join the tribe. When shall it be?"

The one addressed pondered in his turn. Since he was fated to remain among these people for an indefinite time, he could see no objection to going through a ceremonial should they desire it. He did not remain among them through choice of his own, and he cared little what mummeries they might speak over him. Perhaps, after all, the cere-

mony might better his condition by removing all restraint and thus opening an avenue for his departure when the time came. Therefore, he responded that he would be ready at any time. The chief eyed him narrowly.

"It shall be at the next full moon. Then you shall eat of the wolf's liver and pass through the test of the fire," he returned solemnly. His gaze wandered from the powerful frame of the white man to the slender one of the wide-eyed, listening girl. Then a grim smile gathered about his mouth.

"Your flesh shall become our flesh, and your blood shall run in the veins of chiefs yet to come. I have spoken, and my words shall come true."

He stretched out his hand commandingly to the girl.

"Daughter, go sit upon our brother's blanket," he said.

She drew back, and once more there came into her eyes the startled look that the white man had seen there upon the day that he released her from his arms. Well enough he

knew the meaning of her father's command. It meant their betrothal by order of the tribal chief, whose will was that of a czar; that he must, therefore, take her to his heart as his wife; share his tepee with her; become the father of her children, and abide with her through the long years to come until Death threw aside the flap of their lodge and stalked within. He grew cold at the thought.

"We had best wait," he muttered. "There is plenty of time, and I am not yet even a member of the tribe."

The old man's brows contracted and his eyes shone maliciously.

"I have spoken, and it shall be as I have said," was his cold answer. "Daughter, go."

She arose with the quick obedience of an Indian woman whose parent has spoken his final determination, and going to the place indicated, seated herself there. The white man looked around. At the other fires the women were already grinning, and faint smiles fluttered over the faces of all the bucks save Niska. Across his strong, sardonic counte-

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nance there swept a heavy scowl, and his eyes glinted like those of a beast in a covert.

For a few moments there was nothing but silence, then from the women arose a low chant, crooning and monotonous; and when that had died away all save the betrothed pair went within their wigwams. Alone, and by the flickering firelight sat the man and the woman who were to be made as one by the bonds of wedlock; barbarous bonds and rudely tied to be sure, yet as sacred in their import as though cast by the Holy See itself. For in that union would be created new souls in the image of the Most High.

The inscrutable forest crowded them close. Its stillness was that of a vault wherein one hears his own breathings and the ringing of the blood in his ears. At their feet, the neglected embers glowed phosphorescently in the very ghost of a fire. Blackness, and the chill of night, came creeping over them, and the man threw his blanket out so that it covered her as well as himself. It was strange to him, unreal beyond conception, to find himself

sitting like this beside a woman of the wilderness; their betrothal publicly announced and their coming marriage proclaimed to her wild kinsmen. He had never thought, even in his bitterest moments, that his life would end like this. But mercilessly the fates had torn down his hopes, and now, with equal mercilessness, were building his tomb. He knew himself well enough to realize that once mated with this swarthy woman, and with their children at his knees, he would never desert them ever: though "squaw-man" should be his only epitaph. The shock of the thought made him shudder, and he raised his face to the black sky as he cried unspeakingly to it.

Beside him the slender form stirred and a hand fell upon his own. His fingers fell upon it, vaguely conscious of its warmth and firmness. Then something pressed against his shoulder, and lowering his face, he felt her soft cheek against his own. Close against him he could feel the throb of her heart, regularly beating, as she trembled as from a

chill. Instinctively his arm slipped protectingly about her waist as he tucked the blanket more warmly about her. And as he did that her arms closed about his neck and her face buried itself in his breast. When he raised her cheeks a few moments later, touching them with his lips, they were wet with tears. He brushed them away gently.

"Poor little savage!" he thought. "You act very little different from a white woman, after all. Yet you do not really love me, and would sacrifice little for me. You wish a husband for your own sake, and are content to take me because of the prestige it will bring to you. Therefore you are happy; and because you are happy, and because you are a woman, you cry. Yet any other strong man would suit you nearly as well as I."

For an hour or more he held her against his shoulder, then gently loosened her fingers.

"You must go to your tepee now," he told her at the end of that time, and she quickly arose.

It was not yet late, and according to the

custom of her people, she had every right and reason to expect that her lover would remain with her much longer. But with no sign that she cared to stay, save a slight touch of her fingers upon his lips, she slipped away and disappeared within her lodge.

He went to his own tepee and entered. In the unlighted interior he stumbled against the prostrate body of Niska, and stepped aside with a muttered word of apology. Through the darkness the Ojibway, always friendly to him heretofore, snarled at him like a wolf.

CHAPTER V

THE radiance of the full moon flooded the valley with a brilliancy that jaundiced the fires and left their light wan and sickly. From out of his tepee into the shimmer the old chief stepped, with face raised as he muttered an offering upward to the night goddess of the skies. His black hair was crowned with the great head-dress of a generation before, and his face, ochre-smeared, was ghastly in the white light. Long . . . stood before the entrance, muttering and making mystic signs; and thus having invoked the spirits, as his witnesses, sent a weird cry quavering through the night; the cry of the loon, the great diver for whom the candidate had been christened.

From the circle of tepees there arose, in quick response, the hollow notes of the single drum, followed a moment later by the throb-

bing of others, until the air was filled with the muffled sound. And as this swelled in volume, sharp staccato cries arose with ever-increasing frequency until they became linked into a broken chant which now swelled noisily, and now sank low as the murmur of the night breeze amongst the Norways. Then the chief, stepping to the center of the space before his lodge, called again, and from out the dwellings came bent shapes that, forming a circle about their leader, went through the strange contortions of the tribal dance. Then a squaw, her face as wrinkled as the palm of one's hand, came forth with a flaming torch and thrust it into a number of piles of brush which had been builded for the ceremony; and through this tangle of dry branches the flames ran serpent-like upward until they leaped into space and disappeared with a snap and a flutter of their ribboned ends, as red banners snap and flutter in a breeze. The pulsing of the drums ceased, and the men seated themselves in a half-circle before one of the blazes, while the entrances

to the tepees became filled with sharp-eyed women and children, who crouched half in the light and half in the darkness in an eager audience. Around the outskirts of the camp the awed dogs crept in hopefulness that a feast was to come.

"Come forth, you who would be our brother!" cried the old man, and from his lodge the white man stepped. Shrouded from neck to ankles in a blanket he stood erect before them, his features strong and clean-cut, his throat muscular, his close-curling brown beard giving to his head the profile of a warrior of the battle-ax days. From his pouch the chief drew a fragment of fresh wolf's liver and held it out to the candidate.

"Eat, that you may have the gray one's speed and cunning," he commanded; and the white man swallowed the morsel with a slight feeling of disgust. In the silent approbation which followed, the old man stepped close beside the other, hunting-knife in hand. Slightly, yet deep enough to draw a trickle of blood, he first wounded himself upon the

arm, and then pricked the candidate as insignificantly, following the act by rubbing a drop that ran from himself upon the other's wound.

"The blood of the Ojibways now runs through your veins, as yours shall now flow through the bodies of our children yet to come," he said solemnly. "Now the fire test shall be undertaken."

For the first time since he had appeared before them for the ceremony of the night, the one who was to undergo the test appeared to notice the flames. In the few minutes which had been occupied by the preliminaries, the brush piles had become roaring masses of fire that now leaped to twice the height of his head. Three of these fiery barriers had been built in horizontal rows with narrow spaces between them, and these seething hurdles he knew that he must try to leap.

With the close calculation of one who knows he must not misjudge, he scanned and measured them. The leap through the

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first wave of flame would require considerable agility, but he felt that he could accomplish it without great difficulty. Yet, having done that successfully, he must alight fairly upon the narrow strip of ground that was free from fire, and from that cramped space, and with no opportunity to recover or check himself, would be compelled to rise again in another bound equally high, clear the second fire line, alight once more upon another narrow strip, and then surmount the last barrier in the final effort.

The test, as a whole, consisted of a series of flying leaps to be made as a rubber ball bounds, requiring not only the muscular agility to carry him over and beyond the flames, but involving, as well, the nicety of judgment which would land him each time on the narrow unburning strip between the fire lines. A misstep, a faltering, a lack of strength or skill, and he would plunge headforemost into one of the burning masses, to sustain frightful or, perhaps, even fatal injuries. It was a savage test of activity and

courage that had been handed down from time immemorial as the requisite feat to be performed by an alien before he might claim the kinship of the tribe. Each leap would be more difficult than the one preceding, and as the watcher made his mental calculations a sudden determination to attempt a thing which he had often done in his younger days, filled his bosom. While it would be difficult, he had often performed it a few years before when his fame as a college athlete had spread far and wide. Knowing that in leaping as well as in swimming few men were his equal, he smiled inwardly at the hazard.

He cast aside his blanket, and stood in the glare naked save for his moccasins and loin-cloth. Marble white, and with thigh muscles swelling like those of a thoroughbred race-horse, he took his position for the first short run which would give him the necessary momentum. Close about him were grouped the men, their faces alight with approbation of his muscularity; beyond them the straining eyes of the women and children. Then the

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chief waved the command to start, he tightened himself into an elastic ball of muscle and sprang forward.

Over the first barrier he arose as lightly as a thistle-ball arises before a puff of wind, clearing the flames safely but with their red sheet, for a moment, wrapping him from head to foot. An instant, and he had passed through that danger and was falling upon the narrow space which must be his starting-point for the second attempt. Hands held high and knees slightly bent, he struck upon his toes; seemed to sink into the earth; then, with a sharp down stroke of his arms, like a powerful beat of a great bird's wings as it lifts itself clear of the ground, he arose again. Upward and forward he shot in a flying arc that drew a long guttural sound from the throats of all who witnessed, appeared to hover for an instant motionless at the apex of his flight, then, turning midway in the air, in a complete revolution, he shot on and alighted safely beyond the last danger zone. In one tremendous flying somersault he had

covered the last two barriers as a leaper of the circus vaults the backs of horses.

From out of the death-like hush there arose a voice, shrill and involuntary, stabbing the air like a vocal dagger; the voice of a woman as her heart burst forth in a peal of wild exultation.

“My man! He has done it!”

CHAPTER VI

IN the week that followed, the old man, finding that the new member of his colony still evaded him when spoken to about the marriage, delivered his ultimatum.

"Is not my daughter good to look upon?" he asked as a sinister expression crept into the corners of his eyes, and the white man replied that she was, very.

"Has anyone said that she is unfit to be the wife of any man?" he pursued still more ominously. The one addressed shook his head in a terse negative.

"Then, of course, you will marry her as I have decreed."

The innate savagery of his nature was arising against this man to whom he had proffered not only the kinship of the tribe, but his own flesh and blood as well, and who still trifled with him as a surfeited fish merely

nibbles at a bait. And realizing this, and that the crisis had come, the white man told his questioner that he would give his answer upon the morrow. With an evil scowl the old man turned to a skin bag and drew therefrom a number of articles that caused the onlooker to recoil in resentment and disgust.

"These things once belonged to those who disobeyed me," grunted the wrinkled one, as his ferret eyes closely scanned his companion through the slits of his eyelids. "I am getting old and desire peace instead of war; yet I am still the chief, and must be obeyed. Always I have sought to befriend you. I have offered you my daughter for your blankets, and would have you lead me when my eyes have grown dim, for yours will then be still young and strong. What have you, the young man, to say to me, the old one?" The white man's thoughts flew quickly.

"I have told you that the signs are not yet right for my marriage, but that I would answer you to-morrow," he replied as he turned his back upon his questioner.

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Through his answer there rang a growl of defiance that the old warrior's ears were quick to detect, and over the old one's face the blackness of anger settled heavily. In his heart was the strong impulse to spring upon this one who had sullenly left him; but in his cunning brain the voice of reason quickly asserted itself. Never before had he seen a man like this; a man who could perform such prodigies; and undoubtedly it would be wise to humor him a trifle. Beyond doubt, great children would be born of this union of which he dreamed—his grandchildren—and through their inherited strength and wisdom the tribe would again prosper and become powerful. And all this would come about because of his planning. In generations to come, his descendants would boast of him as the wise one, bragging that his blood ran through their veins, as they called him the greatest of their chiefs. Thus would his name be perpetuated and his fame extolled, and, therefore, that this man should marry his daughter he was determined.

Into the forest the new member of the tribe stalked, with resentment and anger gnawing his heart. It was impossible that he should go to his nightly sleep through all the years of his life yet to come with this dark woman at his breast; that he should become the progenitor of a miscegenation race of savages, and that his children should run howling, beast-like, through the wilderness long after his own bones had turned to fungus. The thought revolted him. As for the girl herself, young and physically alluring, he felt a strong liking; in fact, his blood had run much faster as he had held her to him; but to take her as his wife—no.

While by no means a purist, he still had his own moral code, and through that code ran certain strong injunctions. The woman who bore his children must be the one woman of his life, and unto her he would cleave through sickness and health until the grim scepter parted them. Love this tribal woman he did not, and to fondle her always would be intolerable; while to desert her and their

mutual flesh would be the act of a traitor, so cowardly, so repugnant to his instincts, that his manhood bristled at the very thought of it. Yet, he must go through the form of marriage with her in order to preserve himself. The old chief had uttered his ultimatum, and he well knew the obstinacy and mercilessness that lurked in that savage bosom. Well enough, too, he knew the wishes of the girl. She would take him for her husband with both pride and pleasure. Whether this was because she desired him in a savage way; whether it was because of his strength and prestige; whether it was because of ambition to link herself with one whom she knew to be of a dominant race, whether it was a composite of all these things, he could only guess. But he had felt her desire for him in her clasp, and had heard it in her exulting call. Because of these things he knew that she coveted him.

He threw himself upon a log with the abandonment of one who is too weary to travel further. The bitterness of his exist-

ence for the past year sometimes sickened him. In all things which he had endeavored in his life, he had succeeded fairly well, save in one, but failing in that one thing, all else which he had gained was valueless. True it was, even that one failure had been because of his own sin—or is it a sin, after all, for a man to walk as his fathers had walked since the days of Adam? Is it even a fault that a strong man should have a strong man's weaknesses; or that the desires of a thousand generations of ancestors should burn within himself? Down from a virile ancestry he had come, an ancestry that had swept the seas in shallow craft, blazed their way across the new continent, and builded great cities in the midst of forests. And he had gone but little astray from the narrow path, after all. Yet, for that little step aside, he had been cast out of his paradise like an unclean spirit. He had not been able to endure the humiliation back there where all knew what had happened to him, and for a year now he had wandered in his banishment and penitence through

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places where no man knew his face; his restlessness ever driving him on as unrelentingly as he had driven the Crees. Often all desire to live had parted from him, yet always after he had despaired almost beyond endurance there would suddenly come to his soul a great peace and stillness wherein he seemed to hear things not of this world; mystic whispers, infinitesimally small and coming from a distance beyond conception in its vastness. And as he listened to them, oblivious of all else, he would catch the throb of a voice behind them; a voice that he felt rather than heard, as one feels the vibration of an organ's notes after its last sound-wave has sunk too low to record itself upon the ear. And through that voice there pulsed one word, and that word was "Wait," repeated with the insistency of the throb of an artery; and when it would finally cease he had always arisen with hope grown strong once more. Then months might elapse before he seemed to hear it again, and it was in these long, silent periods that hope

sometimes fluttered and seemed about to die.

Seated now upon the log, with his eyes fastened upon the ground and his thoughts running far backward, he saw and heard nothing of what took place about him. A red squirrel chattered from overhead, but his ears took no cognizance of the sound. A chipmunk ran across his foot, but no sense of feeling was conveyed to him. As in a stupor he rested against the birch, in the shrunken attitude of one who has collapsed into himself. From behind, a pair of warm hands touched his cheeks, feather-light, but he did not heed them until under their increasing pressure his physical being summoned back his thoughts through that incomprehensible medium which ever connects the mind, no matter how far it has wandered, with the body.

As one who had been asleep he aroused and turned to find the girl at his back. Indian-like, she had crept after him as he had wandered, with head down, into the forest,

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watched him seat himself and become inert, seeing his broad shoulders gradually narrow and his chest sink, until at last, fearing that an evil spirit was possessing him, she had risen from the brush that screened her, and approached him from behind, with feet that fell as light as dropping leaves. At first, as she looked down at him, she had thought him dead, so fixed were his eyes and so still his breast; and with the cold of a great fear on her she had touched his cheek. An almost imperceptible response of the muscles had reassured her to some extent, and she had tightened her clasp until he was fully aroused and looking up at her. Her relief was great as she saw the blank look fade from his pupils and comprehension enter them, and she smiled down at him, her face close to his own. It was a seductive mouth that he saw close above him, red lips and set with perfect teeth, and he patted her cheek as she laid it against his own. It was as soft and warm as any woman's could have been, and once more the thrill that comes of physical

contact ran through him. Despite his protests, this splendidly molded wild creature was to become his wife, and while he felt that he could never love her, he at least could be kind to her. Yet, at the bounds of kindness his attentions must stop; and having determined upon this he drew her to a seat beside him, where she sat with her hand within his own.

"You came as the lynx comes," he said. She smiled again as she made her reply.

"Your spirit was in the clouds. Had I stalked in upon you like an angry moose you would not have known that I was near. Your ears were asleep, and your eyes were dead. Were you dreaming of me?"

He nodded. "I dream of you much," he answered, glad that he could reply in these words in all truth, yet secretly sorry that she must misinterpret them. She laughed contentedly and drew closer to him, lifting her face to his.

"I wait for our marriage as the drouth waits for the rain. I am patient, but burn-

ing. I shall be a good wife. I shall love you and bring you many children. At no other man will I ever look above his feet. Do you care for me? You have never said."

"Yes, I like you very much."

"That is enough for now. Some day it will be more. When you see the sons I bring you, strong and brave like yourself, and daughters who look like me. Do you think I am handsome?"

"Yes, much more so than any other Indian woman I have ever seen." She pounced upon the qualifying word as a cat upon a mouse.

"Indian woman," she repeated. "I, also, have seen white women. Once I saw two of them at the post. One had hair that shone like a fire at night, and on her face were many small brown spots. The other had a mouth like a fish. They were thin and not half as good-looking as I." Not a trace of boasting was in her tone; the assertion was but the candor of a child who knows whereof it speaks, yet, despite himself, the man smiled.

"I do not doubt you. There are as many kinds of white women as there are birds of the air, and all cannot be beautiful. You are plenty good-looking enough."

She seemed fairly satisfied upon that assurance, and withdrawing her hand from his laid it on his shoulder.

"Then you will be glad to marry me," she half asserted, half questioned. He did not reply, avoiding her eyes and looking into the distance. She drew still closer.

"Anyway, you *will* marry me?" she queried anxiously. Driven to a corner, he turned and faced her squarely.

"If I marry you, you must obey me unquestioningly in all things—you understand that," he told her; and without hesitation she gave assent.

"Yes, for the wife must obey the husband always. Should you command me to kill myself I should obey you, for you are wiser than I and know what is best for me, even to death."

It was hard for him to utter the words

that lay upon his tongue, knowing that they would hurt her, but he forced them out.

"Then you must always remember this. Your father has willed that I marry you, and I shall do so. But I have read the signs of the sky and they tell me that we should not live together now except in spirit. Therefore, I shall build me a lodge by the falls above the village, and live there alone until a voice from the skies which sometimes speaks to me commands me what to do. And when it speaks again, no matter what it tells me, I shall obey it, as you must obey me. Every day you may come and talk with me, but every night you must return to your own tepee. Do you understand?"

Believing in his superior wisdom though she did, and not for an instant questioning the fatalistic communications of the spirit world, yet the woman within her arose in instant revolt against any decree, human or supernatural, which would bar her from this man whom she loved. Her eyes filled with

disappointment, and she almost imperceptibly drew away from him.

"But you said that I am good to look at," she muttered resentfully. He reasserted the statement.

"And so you are, and almost any man might wish to hold you. But you must remember what you have just said; that I am wiser than you and know what is best for us. Should I ever take you in my arms, I will hold you there always. But until I have listened further to the voice from the skies, I must not kiss you."

Her head fell, and she sat brooding. When he spoke to her a few moments later she did not reply, and he lifted her to her feet as he would have lifted a child.

"Come," he said quietly, and she went with him without protest. At the edge of the camp they came upon the chief, who pausing in their path leered at them, secret satisfaction lurking behind the mask of his face.

"I will marry your daughter upon one condition," said the younger man as they faced

one another. "Otherwise you may do as you please with me. I have spoken to her about it, and she believes that I know what is best for us. For a time I must live alone that I may read the sky signs; otherwise misfortune will come upon me. And should misfortune come to me, I shall try to see to it that it comes to you as well." Tall and ominous he scowled down upon the wrinkled one, and the latter shifted cat-like to one side, with a slight movement of his hand towards his knife as he made his reply.

"Very well. You shall have your way at the beginning, as I shall have mine at the end. Though young, you have wisdom, and I will be patient with you as a father should with his children." He pursued his way, with a smile creeping over his cunning old face as he walked.

"With a woman like her coming daily to his lodge, he will not be long in reading the signs aright," he chuckled.

CHAPTER VII

THEY were married in the first days of Indian summer, when the sun shone down upon them like a ball of gold through the opal haze, and the woods were ablaze with splendor. Russet and brown, green and orange, crimson and flaming scarlet flaunted themselves on every side until the eyes, feasting everywhere, became gluttoned with the wild debauch of colors. Through the long reaches of the silent air the calls of the ravens became almost musical, and the great peace that haunted the woodland settled deep into the hearts of its tribesmen.

By the hand he led her over the carpet of fallen pine needles to where he had erected his tepee close by the ever-droning falls. Her garments were of the finest and lightest of deerskins; the deer killed by himself for her; the skins tanned by the craftiest of the old

women until they were cream white and soft as velvet, and her moccasins and leggings were adorned. Around her neck there hung an ancient necklace of wampum that had come down to her from generations that had lived and died before the white man had been heard of by them; and a gold bracelet of unknown history encircled one slender wrist. Her head, wreathed with bronze and gold oak leaves, was held erect, and she walked with the pride of a woman who has been chosen from all others by an emperor. Glancing aside at her and noting her poise, the heart of the man went out to her as it had never done before. Yet, sympathy was still its dominant note.

“Poor little savagel” he thought. “The pity of it, that this day, the greatest that you will ever see, the only one when all have united to do you honor, must end in humiliation. To-morrow the men will smile at each other as you pass, and the women will gabble behind your back, ‘See! there goes the one whose husband kicked her from his blankets.’

Yet, understanding in a way that all this must happen, you still wished to marry me. For the sake of a future for which you hope, you will endure the present. But while I cannot cling to you, at least I will not sacrifice you; for an Indian woman deserted by her husband is the most pitiable of human beings. What sufferings I can spare you, I shall; and you will soon forget me when I am gone." He looked at her again and drew a long breath. Then, upon the impulse of the moment, he rechristened her. Her maiden name was long, hard to pronounce, and meaningless to him. Therefore he spoke to her softly:

" 'Yozondè' I shall call you from this time on; Yozondè, the Oriole, the beautiful one." Her flashing eyes showed her pride as she sank to the needles at his feet. He drew her to his knees, stroking her soft hair as he would have stroked the head of a spaniel. "You are very pretty and I like you much," he told her at length, wishing to please her. He could scarcely hear her answer, so low it was.

"But you do not like me enough to hold me to you." The reproach stung him, but its truth was unanswerable and he made no attempt to deny it. Presently she spoke again.

"Why is it so, my husband?" He answered her as gently as he knew how.

"I have already told you. I am waiting for a voice which will some day command me what to do. I do not know when it will speak again, but I do know that, if I hear it, I shall obey. Always before it has said to me, 'Wait.'"

"Is it the voice of a woman?" she inquired with the quickness of thought as her head fell upon her knees.

"It seems the voice of a spirit," was his evasion. Her answer was slow in coming, seeming to have been born of deep thought.

"I know that I am but a foolish woman and that you are a wise man; yet to me it is not a good spirit that would keep a husband from his wife. But I shall be patient."

His sympathy for her was sincere, and he

stroked her head even more gently. Fearing to say more lest she ask him questions to which he could not reply without wounding her, he spoke little until the sun lowered itself behind the forest, and the darkness, gathering itself beneath the trees close behind them, came creeping stealthily in. Then from a dead birch he tore strips of bark and put them with an armful of wood against the rock, striking fire into the pile with flint and steel. Before the responding blaze he spread his blanket, and with his back settled against a low-boughed pine, he held her with her head resting against his shoulder. To their ears came the low rumble of the falls, the faint hiss of the rapids, and the mysterious night whispers of the forest. She stirred slightly. "The spirits are talking. Do you hear the voice for which you listen?" she asked very low. He negatived.

"No. I do not think it comes from without, but from within me. I seem to feel it rather than hear it. Do you, also, sometimes hear voices within your own bosom; voices that

talk out through your ears rather than into them?" He wondered if she would quite understand, and was curious for her reply. That in himself, or in his kind, products of the highest development of centuries, there might be evolved a struggling embryonic sense, not as yet comprehended, but of whose feeble messages an enlightened person might be faintly conscious, seemed not wholly impossible; but that she, with the unsensitized soul of the savage, could register such subtleties he believed to be wholly improbable. Yet her answer came unhesitatingly:

"Yes, I have listened to them, husband, and they seemed to come from very deep within me. Such a voice whispered to me in the darkness but two nights ago. I listened long."

"And it told you what?"

Her fingers tightened around his as though she feared losing him.

"It told me that if I married you I should suffer much, and that I should weep through many long darknesses, but that no relief

would come of my tears. All night long it talked to me."

"And did you believe it?"

"Yes, I believed."

He looked at her in some wonderment. "Then why did you still wish to marry me?" he inquired. She raised her face and sat looking into the fire as her words fell slowly from her lips.

"When the hunter kills the bear with his knife he carries the scars of the claws to his grave, but shows them proudly as long as he lives. When the warrior slays his enemy in the single fight he risks death, but great satisfaction becomes his. When the woman wins a husband her spirit cries out for, she should be willing to suffer all things in her victory. I am willing to suffer."

His head sunk to a level with hers and his lips lightly pressed her temple. So this was the primitive creature to whom he had denied the capability of really loving; this was the savage whom he had told himself cared for nothing but the virility of a full-muscled

mate. To a certain extent he had been unjust to her; for the rudimental capacity to really love was undoubtedly among her possibilities. Yet her fondness for him was self-centered, after all, and based only upon her physical being and the pride of conquest. Still, for all that, there swept over him, like a wave, an impulse to press her to his breast and hold her there in defiance of what the inscrutable future might bring to him. By every law of justice she was as much his wife as though the mumbled words of all the ordained had shackled them together. And what mattered anything in this miserable life, after all! Then, as he hesitated before the step which once taken would be irrevocable, in his ears he heard the words of the great poet ringing:

“I to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our
glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast
with lesser pains.
Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were
sun or clime?
I, the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files
of time.”

His clasp, which had involuntarily tightened, relaxed, and he sat upright with a mental groan. It was impossible. He did not love her, never could love her, and unswervingly must pursue his cold course for the sake of her own future and his own manhood. He spoke:

"I do not wish that you should suffer. Should any man or beast attack you, I would fight him to the death to protect you. When I do not hold you closer it is not because I do not care for you, but is because I do care. When I send you away from me for the night and tell you not to return until the next sun, it may cause you humiliation now, but it will save you suffering in the end. It is hard for me to talk to you like this. Do you understand?" She nodded and answered him in a voice that seemed to come from far away:

"I hear you, husband, but I do not fully understand. But I do know that there are two ways of killing. The wolf snaps the rabbit fiercely and slays with one bite. The

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wolverine holds its prey more gently, but eats it slowly as it still lives. Both are death to the prey, but I like the wolf's way best. Still, I shall be patient, for I am only a woman and foolish." Suddenly her fingers flew to his lips.

"Listen," she whispered.

From behind them there came a faint rustle and a snap of a broken twig. To the man's ear it was but one of the unimportant night noises of the woods; the breaking of a rotten branch or the misstep of a four-footed prowler; but at the sound the girl leaped to her feet as though stung by a serpent. With incredible swiftness a knife sprang from somewhere about her bosom into her hand, and she stood poised in the shadow of the pines, with nostrils distended and eyes that seemed to burn their way through the darkness; a veritable wild-cat, crouched in defense of her own. Then, with silent swiftness, she vanished among the trees, and he called her name in half alarm as he arose to follow her. There was no response to his appeal, and

he started blindly in the direction which she had taken, one hand held before his face to shield his eyes from unseen hanging branches. A dozen steps and he ran fairly into her.

"What was it?" he demanded. Her hand grasped his sleeve, and she forced him gently backward toward the fire.

"It is gone now. It will come no more to-night," she returned with quiet assurance. He knew that she was evading the truth and pressed her further.

"You saw it. What beast was it?"

"I did not see it well. The darkness is thick, like black water. But it will come no more to-night."

Far from satisfied, but feeling that he would gain little by further questioning, he asked her no more. Through the web of the tree-tops he caught a glimpse of the moon, and half-turned from her.

"It is time we went to our blankets. You know what that means," he told her. though his voice was the gentlest and

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the pressure of his hand the kindest, she quivered.

"Yes, I know. It means that you wish me to leave. I shall obey."

He would have drawn her to him for a moment in an endeavor to comfort her, but at the first tightening of his arms she slipped through them to the ground as sand slips through a glass, clasping his knees convulsively. And realizing that to yield further to his natural impulses would be but to encourage her and prolong the scene, he resorted to the methods of Indian husbands. Almost roughly he raised her and held her at arm's-length.

"Go, and return to-morrow," he commanded.

She turned instantly, and, with blanket thrown over her head, ran from him. Feeling as miserably guilty as though he had struck her, he watched her as she passed out of the circle of light. The occurrence of a few moments before still haunted him, and now a sudden resolve came upon him. Satis-

fied that something more than the misstep of a curious wild beast lay back of the stealthy sound that had brought her to her feet, he waited a short time after her disappearance and then stepped upon the trail that led to the village. At the point where it left the woods, he paused, and from the heavy shadow looked out into the moonlight-bathed valley. A short distance ahead he saw her hurrying on her way, and even as he looked, a tall figure arose from the brake at her side, and upon it she whirled instantly. In the bright moonlight of the open he had no difficulty in recognizing the uprisen one as Niska.

He could not hear what they said, but for a moment they stood as though conversing; then the girl turned abruptly away. Niska, following, held out his hand to her as if in an appeal, but she struck it down, and broke into a run. For a moment the Ojibway gazed after her with no appearance of resentment, then bowing his head, slowly followed in her flying tracks. In the expressiveness

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of the pantomime the watcher did not need mere words to understand what had passed between them. Her tribesman had waylaid her with some words which she resented, and she had turned from him. He had then held out his hand in a final appeal, and she had struck it as though it had been a serpent. Niska had not become enraged, as an Indian man naturally would have been at such an affront from a woman; therefore he must care for her. No longer the watcher was in doubt as to what foot had snapped the twig.

In deep thought he pursued his way back to the lone lodge, repeating to himself, again and again, as he walked, "It is but the passion of one of the wilderness that she bears for me. It is not love, and she will soon forget. Time alone can cure such accidents."

He entered the tepee, fastened the flap from the inside, and removing his outer clothing, went to his coverings. He closed his eyes, and for a long time lay very still, his

thoughts turned inward, but his ears strained for sounds from without. Nothing came to them but the whisper of the trees, and the low drone of the falls. Gradually his form relaxed and his breathing became slower. Then his eyelids fluttered and he slept.

CHAPTER VIII

AS a midwinter dream of summer is terminated by the blowing open of a door and a whirl of snow dashed in the face of the dreamer, so was Indian summer ended. From some far-away coulée of the great Northwest in which it was born, came a wind with the edge of a razor; and the great forest, feeling the cut of it, shivered and moaned like the sea. In their efforts to escape, the streams shriveled and froze hard overnight, and the eye could almost note the steady onward creep of the ice-sheet as it spread itself in swift protection over the bosom of the lakes. Then came the snow in flakes almost the size of puff-balls, falling ceaselessly until the ground and forest roof were deeply buried. Three days later, the sun, in a burst of fervor, burned an opening through the cloud barrier, and the surface of the white

coverlet that spread the ground grew moist under his glance until night came again, when it froze in a thin, shell-like crust. Next, up through this crust the buried partridge came pecking their way, as chicks peck themselves from out their shells, and once freed from their prison roved abroad, spreading their tracks everywhere in a tracery as delicate as lacework. Upon the frail crust, also running light, the snowshoe rabbit scurried, and all night long the fox was busy. And after him, often breaking through the crust because of his weight, came the great timber wolf, who hunted all three who had gone before him with a hunter's luck; sometimes faring well and sometimes poorly indeed. The deer were herded in their yards for mutual protection, but the great moose plowed through the mass in his immense size and strength, unmindful of its hindrance. From low-hanging branches the lynx glared down upon all that ran below him, and often leaped.

Availing himself of the privilege of the newly-married man, who was not expected

for some time after his nuptials, either to work or to hunt except in case of emergency, the groom spent most of the time in his tepee. It was far from being an uncomfortable place, this lone home of his; and as a general proposition he preferred it to the big, bark-covered winter lodge where the rest of the tribe assembled for their nightly gossip. It was amply large for all his needs, thickly lined within by skins and closely surrounded without by nestling firs, and little wind could enter it. Its floor was covered to the thickness of a foot with closely-packed forest tips, and on top of them were spread many warm blankets. A very small fire in the center made it warm even on the coldest days, and the thin smoke of the dry wood, passing through the small opening in the apex, seldom troubled him. Morning by morning his wife came and sat on the skins beside him, first preparing his meals, and afterwards softening pelts by kneading them; meanwhile asking him many questions about the white man's world, and especially about his

women. At other times, when he preferred not to talk, she chanted to herself the low songs of her people; or taking her turn as an entertainer, told him some of the manifold legends of her tribe. In the late evening she always departed unwarned, and never since the first day of their marriage had she clung to him. But she often crept close and rested her head against him as he talked to her, noting his every expression of face and voice with eyes and ears that nothing escaped. It was her company alone that relieved a monotony that otherwise would have been unendurable. In the camp lodge the men talked of nothing but the hunt or of old wars and feats of individual prowess—tales endlessly repeated and known by heart to all who idly listened. They invented nothing, advanced nothing, thought nothing that their forefathers had not thought, and cared for nothing that their ancestors had not cared for. They existed in the present, lived in the past, and sat with eyes turned upon the future as upon a black void; imaginationless

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save for the murmurings of a few indistinct prophecies. In their company the white man found no relief from the tedium, and always, after an hour of sitting among them, returned to his tepee for the companionship of the waiting girl. In her, alone of all of them, existed quick imagination and a desire for knowledge that arose above the heights of mere curiosity. Her thirst for information was that of a child who climbs upon a traveler's knee to listen to his wonder tales of the far-away.

As best he could in her incomplete language, he told her of many marvels. She had heard of railways and the telegraph, but his illustrations of them drew from her sharp gasps of wonder. At his crude explanation of the mystery of the suns and planets that swung over them, she became almost breathless in her awe. The manners and customs of some of the foreign peoples, as he described them, amused her exceedingly, and she often laughed outright at what seemed to her the superlative of the ridiculous—such

as the right of women to hold office; remarking that she would not care to live in a country where the men were women and the women men. But whether or not she understood what he tried to express, she unquestioningly believed him, for her faith in him was the faith of a child in its parent. Had he told her that the moon was but a great toadstool she would have believed it upon the instant, for always she remembered that she was but a foolish woman, while he was a wise man. An instance illustrated this.

He had told her, in a broad way, of the doctrines of his faith and the life of its great disciple. Christ she seemed to accept instantly and gladly. But simple prayer, unaccompanied by gifts or the burning of things which stank, was to her mind a new phase of appeal to the spirit-world, and her desire to test its efficacy at once became acute. She had always believed in the existence of many spirits, and when seeking favors of them, or desiring to placate them, had always done so through the medium of physi-

cal offerings. That an appeal to the unknown world unaccompanied by gifts would be listened to had never before occurred to her. So she eagerly asked for some of the forms of prayer, and as best he could he taught her one or two. She memorized them with the readiness of one to whom writing is an unknown art, and whose memory is the only tablet upon which the words of others are engraved.

The day after he told her this, he happened to go a short distance into the forest, and, returning unexpectedly, saw her kneeling in the snow before an extemporized cross of wood, her hands clasped and her face uplifted. So engrossed was she that she did not hear him, and he passed on without disturbing her. That she was praying to the white man's Christ he was satisfied, but for what she prayed he did not ask, nor did she ever enlighten him. Once or twice later he surprised her similarly at her devotions, but this subject never was mentioned between them after the first day. He made no at-

tempt to convert her, and she made no protestations of belief except her universal faith in him. Whether she found her appeals to the unknowable a comfort or not he never knew.

Deeming it best not to rekindle any latent fires which might still smoulder within her, he treated her with cool friendship, and seldom laid a hand upon her. This neglect she accepted quietly, as she did nearly all things, contenting herself, apparently, by occasionally crawling, kitten-like, close to him as he talked to her. For this passive acceptance of his decree of coldness, he was thankful. He wished no more useless scenes.

"Her passion is starving and will soon die," he thought. "Hereafter our companionship will continue placidly until the time comes when I shall go. She will not miss me much; will perhaps even be glad that I have made place for another. She will be unincumbered, and Niska has a savage's regard for her. He is a magnificent brute, and she will be content with him. That will be the

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logical solution of it all; the only possible ending." So thinking and so believing, he let time roll on.

Then, one afternoon, there came over him a feeling of perverseness with which he was unacquainted. For two days he had been feeling queerly, and now he sat muffled in his blankets, with his eyes moodily fastened on the fire. A steel band seemed to compress his forehead, and his throat was like a dry leaf. Sitting on a blanket beside him, and noting his aversion to answering her, the girl, at last, stopped addressing him, and fell to crooning her low tribe songs instead. But presently he told her in a surly voice to make no more noise; that it disturbed him and that she was a nuisance, and immediately thereafter she grew silent with a tight compression of her lips. When night came she cooked his food with even more than usual care, making his soup from the joints of a newly-killed moose, and broiling him a fish freshly caught by herself through the ice. Almost roughly he thrust this aside and told her to eat it

herself if she wished, doubling himself close beneath the coverlets and growing sullen again. He had never addressed her like this before, and she wondered at it as she ate sparingly of that which she had hoped would cheer him. When she had finished she washed the few dishes in warm water made from melted snow, and for a while watched him intently. Beneath his blankets he stirred uneasily; sometimes muttering. She drew closer.

"Are you ill, husband?" she asked as she let one hand drop as light as thistledown upon his forehead. The skin was dry to her touch, but he told her that he was only tired, and that it was time for her to go. So in this, as in all other things, she obeyed him, and sought her own lodge, with her knees bending beneath the weight of her heart, so heavy it lay within her. But by the earliest light of morning she was back at his side, only to find him staring blankly at the hole in the top of the tepee. Then she knew the cause of it all. The evil spirit of the

snow had possessed him, and full of fear, she hurried into the forest and brought back the bark of the wild cherry and mandrake roots, dug with her knife from the frozen ground. These she made into a bitter brew, and coaxed him to drink of it, which at last he did, muttering and without thanks, after which he slept uneasily. When night came she gave him more of it, together with a few swallows of meat broth.

He seemed a trifle better after that, and for a while slept restlessly with his head upon her knee. Then suddenly he awoke and stared at her with a look in which burned the eyes of an evil spirit.

"Go," he croaked as harshly as a raven. "The night has come and you have no business here. Go."

She tried to reason with him, telling him that he was not well, and that her place was at his side; but at her appeal the demon within his brain glared out at her malevolently, and his hand closed upon his knife as his bared lips showed his teeth.

"Must I command you twice?" he said; and at those words she sprang up in her first fear of him. Yet from the entrance of the tepee she still begged once more that she be allowed to remain, until seeing him start to arise as if to attack her, she fled, sobbing, to the camp. Beneath her own blankets she lay miserably. Sleep came not near her, and always her thoughts were with the lone man whose mind had been stolen. Almost as restlessly as he had done, she tossed in her bed, her ears strained towards the falls, to catch the slightest sound, but hearing nothing but the night wind. Never before in her life had she been so miserable; never before in her life had she longed to be with him as now.

Then in the very heart of the night, and after hours of unrest, she suddenly sat up with a wild impulse surging within her. She must go to him, make sure by her own eyes that he was warmly wrapped, and by the very closeness of her presence be certain that it mattered not if she were not there. She would peep in very cautiously, as cautiously

as the lynx when he prowls at night. If the sick one was asleep and well protected from the cold, she would then sit just within the entrance, where she could watch over him; if he was awake, she would hover close without, that she might be at hand in case he called to her.

Out into the cold she crept and glided over the trail until the tepee loomed shapeless before her, its dim fan of light streaming through the entrance and falling upon the snow. Almost breathlessly she peered within. His blankets were strewn about, and the lodge was empty. With a cry, she seized a fire-brand and bent low as she held the light close to the snow. The print of snow-shoes was plain to be seen as they led into the forest, and her heart seemed to cease beating.

"He has gone—the fever demon has led him away," she moaned. "It will take him afar and leave him there to die. But he has not been gone long. I must overtake him and lead him back."

In her ears the voice of reason called, bid-

ding her to return to the camp and get the men to trail him, but in her great fear she did not listen to it. It was far to her father's lodge, a mile at least, and much time would be lost in the going and coming. He had but little start of her, and surely she could soon overtake a sick man. He had headed for the great frozen lake just over the ridge, and once upon that glittering surface she could easily see and catch him. With a brand in each hand, she plunged into the woods upon his trail; often breaking through the crust and sinking up to her knees, but floundering on with the strength of desperation, calling as she ran:

“My husband! O, my husband!”

CHAPTER IX

UP the steep side of the divide he went, his webbed foot-gear stringing behind him the blurred signature of the snow-shoe. At the crest among the hardwoods he paused for a moment and stared about him with hollow eyes. Behind him the valley lay buried beneath its weight of snow; to the left, the steep plunge of the ridge that ended in the ice-bound tamarack swamp. Before him was the surface of the lake glistening in the moonlight. Muttering, he passed on.

Down the hillside he slid and scrambled until he reached the bordering fringe of birch, and passing through this without pause went scuffling along the surface of the frozen waters close to the somber shore-line. With the faint glimmering of reason which so often remains in the wandering mind of the sleep-walker, he had dressed himself for the jour-

ney with care. His feet were double moccasined, his mackinaw belted closely, and his hands and feet protected by the fur mittens which she had made for him, and through which the cold came but gratefully to his hot skin. The strength of delirium was within him, and he plunged on with the swinging gait of a caribou. To his mind, in its distortion, he seemed not to be running upon a crust, but rather leaping through space, the snow beneath him being vaporish clouds which his feet spurned feather-light, and the hum of the night wind in the trees, the voices of innumerable harps. All sense of perspective was gone, and to him the shimmering surface of the frozen lake was infinity.

Another man, under other conditions, delirious as he was, would have run wildly for a while and then fallen; but mile after mile he swung along with undiminished swiftness. His sickness had not been of such duration as to impair his strength much; and his reserve force, answering the call of his hallucination, poured itself forth unstintedly. His brain,

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alert as ever, but all askew, rioted in the rush of the cold night air, and his bosom was thrilled by the incredible swiftness with which the snow seemed to fly backward beneath his feet. So on and on into the glow he went, with his eyes fixed far in advance, his point of destination unthought of, yet searching for some unknown thing as one gropes aimlessly for an unremembered lost object in a dream.

For an hour he ran, and then saw before him the side of a cliff which bounded the extremity of the lake. Perpendicularly it rose to the height of the tallest pine, and he stopped before it with the vague sensation that this was the end of all things; that he had flown to the limits of the universe, and now was halted by its uttermost bounds. He faced backward. Very well. Since he had traversed the length of space and not found that for which he sought, certainly he must have overlooked it on the way. He had come too fast, and had overrun it, and now would go more slowly on the return journey and

surely find it. In vain he tried to recall what it was for which he looked. His remembrance was blank, but of one thing he was sure. When he found it he would recognize it. So backward he went at half his former speed.

Before him lay a finger-shaped promontory that stretched out into the lake as though the earth were lapsing deeply of the waters, and this he rounded at a slow shuffle. Before him was a straight-away expanse for a full mile, and he scanned it with a brow that was wrinkled by the anxiety of his quest. Then, as his gaze swept it he gave a great start, for, far beyond, he saw a dark object stumble and lie motionless, while at the same instant from out of the shadow of the trees there slunk the gaunt form of a great gray runner of the north woods. Now he knew that he had found his quest, and with hair bristling and the hot blood surging to his throat he leaped forward. Seating himself close beside the prostrate body, with the doggedness of one who has found his prey,

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and will not be driven from it, the great wolf watched the man's approach with bloodshot eyes.

To within a dozen yards of the silent pair the runner came without slackening his pace and then paused. To his distorted mind all the world was oblivion save the two forms before him, but those he saw as one sees actors in the center of a spot-light when all else is invisible. His whole being was concentrated upon them with an intensity that would not have heeded a gun fired behind his back, yet not a movement of theirs could escape him. Possessed of the sole idea that this motionless woman was the one for whom he sought, and whom he loved with a yearning unutterable, and that the beast was a demon which he must destroy, he approached the conflict with a madman's cunning. Coherency of speech came back to him.

"Get out," he called sharply. The wolf's lip curled.

"Puckachee! get out," he cried again, his

mittens falling upon the snow and his knife-blade suddenly gleaming in the light. And at the ominous glitter the great brute slowly arose, and with teeth bared and ears flat, slowly stalked about him with stiffened legs and tail rigid. And even with his mind all awry, the man realizing his great size and the famine light in his eyes crouched, and with point held low, wheeled in his tracks so that the red eyes of the one and the blue eyes of the other ever met point to point. Three times the brute made the circle complete, then the man rushed.

With a cat-like leap, a snarl, and a snap of his teeth, the beast leaped far aside, while the man tripping unluckily from the force of his wasted knife-sweep, fell heavily through the crust upon hands and knees. And before he could recover himself from the smother, the wolf leaped in. At the first crunch of the iron jaws upon the wrist the knife fell from the nerveless arm; but twisting like a worm, the man buried the fingers of his free hand in the shaggy

throat above him with the grip of a bear-trap.

Few men have killed a gaunt timber wolf, thirty inches high at the shoulder, with their naked hands, but the demented one did it; slew him with the magnificence of his strength and the fierceness of the delirium within him; strangled him until the red tongue hung limp from the jaws and the fire in the famished eyes had died to ashes. Then he arose and bent over the girl, who, snowshoeless, had floundered after him in her wild terror until, at last, she had fallen in helpless exhaustion.

"Beatrice!" he cried exultingly. "At last I have found you. At last I am forgiven, and at last I shall take you home again." As though she had been a child he raised her and bore her over the backward way, scrambling up the steep hillside and running swiftly down its far slope. Straight as an arrow flies, he carried her to the tepee, and kicking off his snow-shoes, laid her upon the skins, and held her to him. Vainly she begged him

to release her that she might dress his wound; but with a laugh he tore a strip from a blanket, bound it around his wrist, and drew her closer than before. Incessantly he babbled to her of his great love, his wanderings, and his universe-wide search for her; telling her half-incoherently, in a mingling of their tongues, of his life among the Indians, of his forced marriage to a wild woman, and the caresses that he had spurned. And she, listening and understanding but a part of what he said, yet understanding enough to comprehend all, cried aloud in her agony of heart as she vainly struggled to escape the smothering arms and caresses. And at last, well knowing that all this love was not for her, and that he imagined her to be another woman, she suddenly ceased her struggles and buried her face in his bosom, flooding it with her tears.

The sun had climbed to half the height of the skies before he awoke and found her sitting quietly by his side. His reason had returned, but his weakness was such that he was unable to lift his head, and his muscles racked

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him. Of the night before he remembered nothing, and when he questioned her she told him as much as she wished him to know, and nothing more, as she ceaselessly bathed and lotioned his swollen arm.

CHAPTER X

IN two weeks he had recovered save for a slight stiffness in his right arm where the beast's fangs had been buried. Not even the ghost of remembrance of that night when he had run the snows in his delirium lingered in his brain; and when he asked her how he came to be wounded she merely told him, in a monotonous voice, that he had wandered in his illness; that she had followed him, and found him in combat with the beast which he had slain; and that he had then come back to the tepee with her without protest. He bent over her as she finished the simple story and praised her for her fidelity in following him; stroked her temples, and told her that she was a brave woman and a good one, and that he was very fond of her.

The caresses and praises she received without visible emotion, and more than ever he

became convinced that her feeling for him now was but that of plain duty, and that should he leave her, through any cause, her sorrow would be neither great nor lasting. Still, every day, when he did not care to hunt or fish, she came and sat beside him, and nightly she departed, usually having said little during her stay and, so far as he could observe, idle of mind. Yet she frequently anticipated his little wants with an intuition that astonished him.

As time wore on in unending monotony, a moroseness gradually came upon him that at last settled into dogged sullenness. By day he wandered restlessly far into the forest or upon the frozen lakes, with a dead weight of hopelessness within his bosom, while at night he listened through the long hours of stillness for the voice that had so long been silent. Had it forgotten him? Would it leave him, unspoken to, for all his days in that wilderness, at last to die unremembered in the history of men? Was he, after all, fated to live his life apart from all that he held

nearest and dearest to him, and eventually turn to this dark woman, who so quietly sat out the long days with him, as his last solace?

In his mental unrest he ran the forest as a hungry beast ranges for prey, seeking forgetfulness at night in the stupor that comes from physical exhaustion, as his only relief. And then, one night, at the end of a long day of fierce travel through the snow, as he lay wearily upon his bed, a feeling of restfulness like the calming influence of a strong opiate came creeping over him. The light of the fire fluttered and faded from his eyes, the hoarse voice of the forest sank to a lullaby, and distinctly there rang in his ears the drone of the ice-fettered falls. Whether he dreamed or not, none watching him could have told, and he himself never knew; but to his ears the sound of the waters gradually took to itself rhyme and rhythm, and through the darkness came pulsing a voice, infinitely distant, summoning him, again and again, with the steady insistency of a tolling bell. Incapable of self-government, he seemed to be

floating in a great darkness which gradually merged into light, as thin curtains gradually are withdrawn to expose a scene, and then far before him, as far as the planets of space themselves, he saw a mystic circle of light, halo-like; and in the midst of the light there knelt a woman with the fairest of skins, who held before her a picture upon which she gazed wistfully. And as he looked, he saw her press it to her lips, and straining his sight to the uttermost, he saw that the likeness she kissed was his own. And at that he moaned and stretched his arms upward, with his lips moving as though he were sending his voice toward her through that infinite space.

Then she seemed to turn upon him and smile; and through the unutterable void pulsed a voice as insistent as the tolling of a bell, saying, "Come, come." His tense form relaxed, his breathing became regular, and he seemed to sleep.

He awoke with the rising sun, the joyous remembrance of it all perfect within him, and

impatience raging like a fire in his breast. Vision or dream, trance or imagination, he knew not what it was nor cared a whit in the wild happiness that possessed him. The summons for which he had listened in the long year of his wanderings and despair had reached him at last, and come what might, he would obey it instantly. But the way back was long and filled with hardships, and first of all, he must contrive his escape from the tribe. Neither snow nor floods could hold him now, for he had heard the cry of his blood and would gladly risk all needful dangers in his impatience. But with the desire to live now surging through every vein, he became both cautious and cunning, lest death should cheat him of the happiness which life promised.

While he was free to ramble about as he wished, provided he made no attempt to escape, he well knew what vengeance would be his tribe brothers' should he flee from wife and tribe and be recaptured by them. And in these snows they could follow his trail

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at full speed, and, knowing the cut-offs as they did, could run him down as wolves run down a buck. Therefore his manner of leaving them must be such that they would make no attempt to follow him; and herein lay the great peril and difficulty. Furthermore he must learn the trail to the nearest post and have provisions enough to carry him there, for otherwise he would inevitably die of starvation in the forest. And there was but one person who would give him the help he must have, and that one was the wife he was to leave forever. She knew where the post trail lay, and could direct him to it, and she also could secure the dried provisions which he must have to gnaw upon in the long run. The rest he would have to do himself.

As to her agreeing to help him, he felt little doubt. He would tell her nearly all, and frankly request her assistance, making her understand, if she did not already comprehend, that he could never be a real husband to her, and promising her for her assistance nothing but his gratitude. Obedience was

her first law, and lately she had acted with great indifference toward him. Pliant as she was, he felt that he could command her to do anything. She would obey him silently, assist him mechanically, and bid him farewell stoically. He always had impressed upon her that he would obey the voice should it come to him again, and believing in the supernatural as she did and having lost her warmth for him, she would offer no objections to his departure. Still, he was very fond of her; and knowing that he would really miss her very much, he wandered about despondent for the time that he must break the news to her. Still, it must be done, and, therefore, he would do it at once without deceit or equivocation. She had been faithful and loyal to him, therefore he would be honest with her.

Unhesitatingly, but as kindly as he knew how to choose his words, he addressed her when she came to him that day.

"Last night the spirit voice spoke to me again. It had a different message this time."

The small hand that he had taken withdrew itself.

"She called to you and told you to come," she whispered, her face taking on the grayish tinge of wet ashes. Noting it, he wondered if she really would be hurt, after all. He hoped that she would not, and sought to avoid any latent jealousy which might exist.

"I did not say that it was a woman, I said it seemed a spirit voice," he answered. "But it summoned me and I must obey."

"And you will not return to me?" she asked, quickly but despairingly. He tried to take the hand again, but it evaded him.

"That I can not say. We do not know what will happen to us in this world, where each wind that blows changes our course. Still, I may come back to you if you so wish. Yet I cannot promise now." The color came back to her face and her old expression of disinterest assumed its usual place.

"You will not return. I too have visions" she responded very faintly. Then, as he made no reply, she spoke again.

"They will follow your tracks in the snow and kill you. And even if you should out-run them, you will starve. Neither do you know the trail. Have you thought of all this?"

"Yes, and for these reasons, you as my wife must assist me. I have always told you if the voice spoke to me again I should obey it, as you have told me that you would always obey my voice. Until I heard it last night I could not know whether I was to remain here or not; but, feeling that I might some time be called away, and caring much for you, I have protected you always and sent you from me. Should I not come back you are still a woman unincumbered, and any single man of the tribe will be proud to marry you, Yozondè, the beautiful one. I shall think of you much, and when I am gone, shall hope that you are happy."

She swayed slightly, her eyes closed and her lips tightly compressed.

"Happy?" she whispered. "Can the body be happy without its soul? Can the woman

who loves be happy all alone?" He put his arm about her, realizing that he cared for her after all.

"Would you be really sorry if I go?" he asked her. She grew rigid on the instant, and he had never before heard her voice so cold.

"No. You wish to leave, and I would not have you stay. It is better as it is. I will help you in whatever way you ask. The trail to the post is blazed, and, once found, anyone who has eyes can follow it. I will tell you where it begins; but you must reach it with no footprints left behind you. Can you vanish in the air like a raven?"

"No. I must go on my feet like any other man."

"Then how can you prevent their following you?"

He drew closer to her, speaking very low. "I have said before that you are brave and patient, and that I cared much for you. Therefore, I have always done toward you as my brain and heart told me was right. And

even now both brain and heart tell me that what I am about to do is for the best—your good as well as mine. I have used what wisdom I possess that you might remain free and be looked upon with respect in case I was called away; and even in leaving I shall so arrange it that no one may ever say that I ran away from you. And because I have done these things, and because I would have defended you as I would my own self, I now trust my life to you as you might at any time have trusted yours to me. I may lose it anyway in my going; but even should I not, you could betray me by a word after I am gone and send them in pursuit. Will you be faithful once more?"

She answered him in a dead voice:

"When I took you to be my husband I swore to the Great Spirit that I should obey you in all things, and a faithless wife must crawl through all eternity in the body of a serpent. I am your wife and I am not faithless. I wish you to go, and will do whatever a foolish woman can."

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"Then, listen. To-morrow, in the view of those who happen to be about, I will walk heedlessly upon the ice of the river to where the air-hole is. Through the hole I will fall and disappear to be seen no more. Do you understand?"

She twitched convulsively; then as suddenly relapsed into her stolid indifference.

"I think so. You are Onoto, the loon, the great diver beneath the waters, and you will swim far under the ice. But even the loon must soon have air. How can it be done?"

"I have thought it out. To-night when all are asleep I will chop holes in the ice, each the distance of a long swim under the water from each other, and leading around the bend. About these holes that I chop I will build little mounds of snow, so when coming to them I can lift my head unseen and fill my lungs with air. The people will gather around the first hole, and when I do not reappear they will say that I have been carried away by the current and drowned.

They will not dream of looking further. A few swims will take me around the bend beyond their sight, and there I will come up through the last hole to the surface and run swiftly a short distance into the woods where you will have built a fire and placed dry clothes, together with snow-shoes and provisions. Upon a piece of bark you can draw me a map good enough to guide me to where the blazed trail begins, and from there all I need do is to travel fast. Do you see why I should fail?"

She had seated herself with hands lying in her lap like forgotten things and her head turned away. He could not help but note the death-like set of her features; but when she spoke again her voice betrayed absolutely no emotion.

"The plan is full of danger. The water spirit that lives under the ice may drag you down. Still, I think you will outswim him. Your blood runs fast and your body is warm, and you should be able to go far before the cold numbs you. I will have all in readiness

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at the great pine around the bend by the next sun. The map you will not need. Follow the river until it runs between two hills which are rounded like the breasts of a woman. The post trail begins there."

He bent beside her and took her in his arms as he kissed her forehead and hands. Like one without life she submitted, neither resisting nor responding; and when he placed her upon her feet and bade her good-by, she left him without answer.

"She cares a little, but not greatly. Her heart is nearly dead towards me, and she will forget as the forest animals forget," he told himself as he watched her go. "But be that as it may, our lives can not run along side by side. It was not so ordained in the beginning, and it cannot be. The blood of my own race has sounded its call for me and I must go. It is better as it is."

Yet, when he turned back into the tepee, its silence and unspeakable lonesomeness haunted him almost to sickness. His heart beat heavily, and for the moment his regret was strong.

Upon the skins lay one of her fur mittens, forgotten in her departure, and picking it up he carefully thrust it beneath the bosom of his shirt, making it fast there by a buckskin thong.

CHAPTER XI

IN the middle of the forenoon of the next day he stepped upon the ice of the river, and with his face lowered and half covered by his blanket, walked as one in deep meditation towards the village which lay in the shelter of the bank beyond. Suddenly one of a group of small boys who were fishing by the far bank, sent up a shrill cry of warning, and a second later the absent-minded one threw up his hands and vanished through the thin ice of the air-hole. Like a pack of young wolves the youngsters came racing towards the opening, shattering the air with their cries and bringing the entire camp at full leap on their heels.

“He has gone under the ice—Onoto, the loon,” screamed the one who had cried the warning. “He walked like a blind man, and sank like a stone. See, here is his blanket rising.”

Helplessly they gathered around the shattered opening, the bucks silent and scowling, the women beginning to wail. The water was deep and fast; and had they been the wisest people in the world, any attempt to rescue him would have been futile, since the current would have swept him away. Five minutes passed, and then the old chief spoke gravely:

"He is gone forever, my people. The water spirit has seized him and he will be seen no more. Even the loon itself would have drowned before this. To-night we will beat the drums and chant the death-song the darkness through. Niska, go you to his lodge and tell my daughter that she has no husband. Come away, brothers."

Back to the main lodge they went, with the hush of death upon them.

Niska, hurrying away on his errand, felt a savage joy leaping within him. At last this white man, this worker of miracles, this greatest of leapers and swimmers, who had robbed him of the woman he so strongly

craved, had gone under the ice, drowned like a foolish boy, and no longer could stand between him and what he desired. His heart exulted, and he ran swiftly as he chose the words that he would say, and wondered what her answer would be as she listened.

He found her sitting upon the blankets of the tepee, and stopped before her, standing straight and tall. "He is dead—your husband. He has been drowned under the ice, and you will never see him again. Like a fool he walked into the hole, and like a fool he was swept away," was his greeting. She did not move or answer, only looking at him with dry eyes.

"Your heart does not leap, therefore you loved him but little, this husband who ever drove you from him," he continued, flushed with new hope by her quietness. She shook her head.

"No, I am not sorry that he is gone. It is better so," was her low response. He bent over her, with his dark face lighting.

"Then you will take me for your husband.

I will not send you from me, but I will always hunt for you. One tepee shall be enough for us, and one blanket will cover us when we are old. Our children shall be many, our sons strong and brave like me, our daughters good to look upon like you. He will soon be forgotten. My love for you runs like a rapids, and we will be married and go to the tribe from which my mother came. Their arms will be open to us, and they will never know this white man lived." Desire strong and fierce to possess this fairest of his tribeswomen was upon him, and stooping, he let his hand fall upon her head.

"Come," he said.

For a moment she made no movement, looking far into the white forest with eyes that saw nothing; then gathering up a few scattered articles, she rolled them tightly together. Arising, she went with him along the way over which the departed one had led her as a bride by the hand, her head bowed; following the hunter as a woman should follow a man; stepping closely in his tracks.

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Far down the river the fleeing one, now warm and dry, paused for an instant between the rounded hills, with his eyes resting on the ancient blaze that marked the way back to the post.

"Her words were true, and she will not betray me. She was faithful to the last, and I shall miss her long after she has forgotten me. Next to one other woman, I shall ever hold her memory dearest," was his thought. Then the trouble that had clouded his face lifted, and he started forward.

"Beatrice, I am coming," he whispered.

Burning with impatience, going swiftly, yet holding himself well in check, like one who has far to run and knows that he must husband his strength wisely, he went swinging over the snow that lay deep above the buried trail.